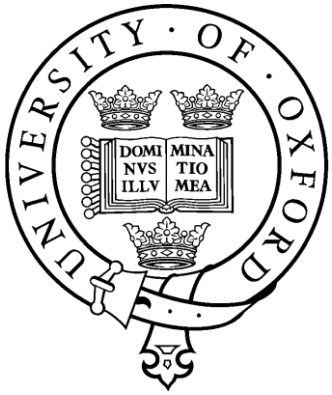
# The Political Values of Early Whig Drama and Poetry by Women

## Catharine Trotter, Susanna Centlivre, and Sarah Fyge Egerton.




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# ABSTRACT

This thesis examines women writers' contributions to the development of Whig literary culture in the bitterly partisan era known as 'The Rage of the Party'. It takes as its focus the drama and poetry of three contemporaneous female authors – Catharine Trotter, Susanna Centlivre, and Sarah Fyge Egerton – a circle of self-confident female wits, who emerged in the decades after the Glorious Revolution, and wrote in support of Whig ideology and aesthetics. This project, then, challenges the received notion that Toryism was more conducive to early modern women's public voice. It also contributes to the study of Whig cultural formation, which has hitherto focused on male writers and the genre of poetry. Pioneering scholarship on literary Whiggism has revealed the existence of a dynamic Whig literary culture long occluded by a 'Scriblerian' notion of literary history. Through the recovery of female interventions in Whig public discourse, this study modifies our view of early Whig culture, revealing a richer, more complex picture of the breadth and variety of the Whig cultural programme than previously conceived. A major focus of my research is the significance of the post-Revolution stage as an important site of Whig cultural production and a vital source of support for women writers, who capitalized on the patronage and industry networks of the theatre to enable and support their literary careers.

This study's engagement with female responses to partisan debates produces some surprising results. Trotter's identity as a Catholic did not preclude her from articulating vigorous support for the tenets of the Revolution, nor did it prevent her from receiving the patronage of a number of Whig luminaries. This illuminates the richness and variety of early Whig culture, which accommodates surprisingly divergent religio-political positions. The focus on Egerton's political poetry reveals a hitherto unacknowledged picture of her as a patriotic Whig poet, whose well-known feminist views are enabled and informed by the ideology and tropes of Whig verse. While readings of women's Whiggish interest have largely focused on their concerns with marriage and a Lockean social contract, my research illustrates how Whiggish women's political identities are more often articulated through their attitudes to partisan national issues: war, peace, martial heroism, commerce, speculation and religious toleration. Women engaged with these masculinist themes in explicit dialogue with their male contemporaries, refashioning the norms of the dominant culture, and alerting us to the nature and extent of female political agency.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

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| *A Pacquet from Will's* | *The Second Volume of the Works of Monsieur Voiture, Containing His Familiar Letters to Gentlemen and Ladies. To Which is added, A Pacquet from Will's: Or, a new Collection of Original Letters on Several Subjects* |
| Birch, 'Life' | Thomas Birch, 'The Life of Mrs Catharine Cockburn. By Thomas Birch,' in Catharine Trotter, *The Works of Mrs. Catharine Cockburn, Theological, Moral, Dramatic, and Poetical. With an account of the life of the author, by Thomas Birch*, ed. Thomas Birch, vol. 1 (London, 1751) |
| Foxon, *English Verse* | David F. Foxon, *English Verse, 1701-1750: A Catalogue of Separately Printed Poems With Notes on Contemporary Collections Editions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975) |
| Locke, *Correspondence* | John Locke, *The Clarendon Edition of the Works of John Locke: The Correspondence of John Locke,* ed. E.S. de Beer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976-89) |
| *The History of the Revolutions in Sweden* | *The History of the Revolutions in Sweden, Occasioned by the Change of Religion, and Alteration of the Government in that Kingdom. Written Originally in the French, by the Abbot Vertot. And now done into English by J. Mitchel, M.D.* |
| *The London Stage* | *The London Stage, 1660-1800. A Calendar of Plays, Entertainments & Afterpieces Together with Casts, Box-receipts and Contemporary Comment. Compiled from the Playbills, Newspapers and Theatrical Diaries of the Period* |
| *POAS* | *Poems on Affairs of State, Augustan Satirical Verse, 1660-1714*, gen. ed. George deForest Lord (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1963-75) |
| Trotter, *Works* | Catharine Trotter, *The Works of Mrs. Catharine Cockburn, Theological, Moral, Dramatic and Poetical. With an account of the life of the author, by Thomas Birch*, ed. Thomas Birch (London, 1751) |

# INTRODUCTION

## 'The Nine Muses'

On 23 September 1700, four months after the death of John Dryden, a volume of commemorative poems to the former poet laureate appeared in print: *The Nine Muses, or, Poems written by Nine Several Ladies Upon the Death of the late Famous John Dryden, Esq*. (1700) (hereinafter *The Nine Muses*).[1] The collection marked a pivotal event in women's literary history: the publication of the first all-female-authored volume of poetry in Britain.

This feminocentric poetic project can be seen as an attempt to capitalize on the death of an esteemed literary figure for commercial purposes. It also posed an assertive female response to the masculinist collection of elegies to Dryden published three months earlier: *Luctus Britannici* (1700).[2] *The Nine Muses* bespeaks a new confidence in female literary endeavour in the decades following the Glorious Revolution of 1688, which witnessed the flourishing of women's literary output, particularly in the genre of drama.[3] Three of the contributors to *The Nine Muses* – Delarivier Manley, Catharine Trotter and Mary Pix – formed a pioneering group of female dramatists who took the stage by storm in the theatrical season of 1695-6, earning them the sobriquet 'The Female Wits' in a misogynistic contemporary play of the same name.[4] The other contributors to the poetic volume comprise the then aspiring playwright, Susanna Centlivre; the proto-feminist poet, Sarah Fyge Egerton; and Lady Sarah Piers, an aristocratic Whiggish writer. There is evidence that these women formed a mutually supportive female literary network. Pix, who was already an established dramatist,

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[1] On the dating of the volume, see Anne Cotterill, '"Manly Strength with Modern Softness": Dryden and the Mentoring of Women Writers,' in *Mentoring in Eighteenth-Century British Literature and Culture,* ed. Anthony W. Lee (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 26.

[2] The some fifty elegies in *Luctus Britannici* were mainly written by university men but also included contributions by two women: Sarah Fyge Egerton and Elizabeth Thomas. For a comparative reading of *The Nine Muses* and *Luctus Britannici*, see Mark Fulk, 'Reading Dryden's Body: Funeral and Neoclassical Poetic Elegy in *The Nine Muses* and *Luctus Britannici*,' in *Dryden and the World of Neoclassicism*, eds. Wolfgang Gortschacher and Holger Klein (Tubingen: Stauffenburg, 2001), 289-99.

[3] For example, the theatrical season of 1695/6 was a remarkable one with six plays composed by women performed on the London stage, constituting over one-third of all new plays that season; see Paula R. Backscheider, *Spectacular Politics: Theatrical Power and Mass Culture in Early Modern England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 71.

[4] *The female wits* [etc] (London, 1704). This anonymous play was performed in 1696, satirizing the three female playwrights, Manley, Pix and Trotter, and ridiculing female pretensions to learning.

was a mentor to Centlivre, who was embarking on what was to become a highly successful career as a playwright.[1] Manley, who appears to have commissioned and collected the poems, was then a personal friend and supporter of both Trotter and Egerton.[2] Sarah Piers, a minor Whig grandee, was a patron and confidant of Trotter. All these women supported each other's literary endeavours, writing and publishing commendatory poems to promote each other's works.[3]

*The Nine Muses* has attracted some scholarly attention, which largely focuses on the gendered implications of the volume.[4] However, critics have not explored any possible partisan connotations of the collection, which, as we shall see, are far from clear. In the last years of his life, Dryden had shown himself a staunch Tory loyalist; despite the shifting allegiances he had shown in the past, he remained faithful to James II and his own adopted Catholicism at the expense of his laureateship and political enfranchisement. Yet Dryden was a Tory (and possible Jacobite) with a surprising number of close connections to the prominent Whig figures of the day, including William Congreve who was Dryden's protégée and literary executor; the writers and Kit-Cat members, Samuel Garth and John Vanbrugh; the publisher Jacob Tonson; as well as a young Whiggish woman writer, Elizabeth Thomas.[5] Ophelia Field gives a vivid account of the generous public tribute paid to Dryden by the Whig Kit-Cat Club upon his death.[6] The Whig statesman, Charles Sackville, the Earl of Dorset, arranged for Dryden's body to be exhumed so it could be reburied with great ceremony at Westminster Abbey. The funeral was financed by several members of the Kit-Cat Club; the funeral procession was led by Charles Montagu, the Earl of Halifax, a key member of the Whig Junto who was first lord of the Treasury of William's government in 1697-9. Many of these Whigs had personal connections to Dryden; but as Field rightly argues, the Kit-Cats' public tribute to this towering figure of Stuart literary culture was also a means of demonstrating their 'generosity and

[1] For the relations between Pix and Centlivre, see John Wilson Bowyer, *The Celebrated Mrs. Centlivre* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1952), 93-94.
[2] See Ros Ballaster, introduction to *The New Atalantis*, by Delarivier Manley (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1991), xii.
[3] For details on the ways in which the poets of *The Nine Muses* supported each other's works, see pp.51-52.
[4] See for example, Kate Lilley, 'True state within: Women's elegy 1640-1740,' in *Women, Writing, History 1640-1740*, eds. Isobel Grundy and Susan Wiseman (London: Batsford, 1992), 72-92; and Anne Kelley, '"What A Pox Have The Women To Do With The Muses?" *The Nine Muses* (1700): Emulation or Appropriation?,' *Women's Writing* 17, no. 1 (2010): 8-29.
[5] See Ophelia Field, *The Kit-Cat Club* (London: Harper Perennial, 2009), 2-5.
[6] Ibid., 1-6.

good literary taste', and 'posthumously appropriating Dryden to their distinctively Whig narrative of English literature'.[7] The Kit-Cat-sponsored funeral of Dryden is a striking example whereby Whig literary culture departs from the partisan norms of Whig political culture, in a calculated move to bolster Whig credentials in the cultural arena. Unlike Dryden's 'Whiggish' public funeral, there is no evidence or reason to believe that *The Nine Muses* was a similarly partisan production. The poets of *The Nine Muses* comprised both a Tory supporter (Manley) and Whig loyalists (Trotter, Centlivre, Egerton, Pix and Piers). The volume paid tribute to a famously pro-Stuart literary figure but was dedicated to a prominent Whig statesman and patron, Charles Montagu. What is most likely is that in addition to the commercial motivations of producing the volume, *The Nine Muses* was a women's strategic initiative to align its contributors to one of the greatest writers of his generation. Just as the Kit-Cats sought for their share of Dryden's memory in order to burnish their Whiggish cultural credentials, the female poets of *The Nine Muses* aimed to appropriate Dryden's cultural authority to bolster their collective legitimacy as women writers in the literary arena.

Yet the cross-party unity exhibited by *The Nine Muses* in which women of different partisan leanings came together to pay tribute to a leading male literary figure was not to last. The sense of a female solidarity still possible at the end of the seventeenth century would soon fray in the escalating and bitter partisanship which marked the reign of Anne (1702-14). Manley would go on to become a significant Tory 'hack', working with Jonathan Swift as part of Robert Harley's Tory propaganda team in 1711-14.[8] She co-edited the Tory periodical, the *Examiner*, with Jonathan Swift in 1711, and published the notorious scandal chronicles, *The New Atalantis* (1709) and *Memoirs of Europe* (1710), which viciously satirized prominent Whig political figures of the day. What is not often noted is that Manley's published works during her time as a Tory propagandist also scathingly condemned her fellow poets of *The Nine Muses* who held Whiggish affiliations – Trotter, Egerton, Centlivre, Pix and Piers – an issue I will enlarge upon later in this thesis. In the intensely partisan conditions of Anne's reign, Trotter fashioned herself as an articulate defender of John Locke in her philosophical

[7] Ibid., 2.
[8] See Rachel Carnell, *A Political Biography of Delarivier Manley* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2008), 199-214.

treatises; both Trotter and Egerton lauded the Whig hero, the Duke of Marlborough, in their panegyrics at the height of the war on the continent; Centlivre positioned herself as an outspoken proponent of the Whig position during the fraught run-up to the 'Tory peace' of 1713 and the Succession Crisis of 1713-14. Meanwhile Manley, now a major Tory propagandist, became estranged from her former friends on the other side of the political divide, publicly satirizing and attacking her erstwhile compatriots.

Partisanship, then, appears to have trumped female solidarity. And these women's relations to each other mirror the increasingly divisive party political battle lines drawn in the period.[9] As partisanship intensified during the reign of Anne, women's literary productions (as did those of their male counterparts) became increasingly permeated with party politics and engaged with the controversial political issues of the time. This study is concerned with the significance of partisan politics in women's writing, specifically the impact of Whiggish political affiliations on women's public discourse, in the fiercely partisan environment that marked 'The Rage of the Party' through to the early years of the Hanoverian accession. This thesis argues that Whiggish political commitments played an important and enabling role in fostering women's writing during a crucial period of Whig cultural formation in the decades following the Glorious Revolution of 1688. This was a time of intense political partisanship which coloured literary expression, publications and connections. It was also a period that witnessed the flowering of women's writing in drama, poetry and prose and the emergence of an important group of women writers, a number of whom held Whiggish political loyalties.[10] I focus on three women in particular, all of whom were contributors to *The Nine Muses* who held Whiggish political affiliations: Catharine Trotter, Susanna Centlivre, and Sarah Fyge

[9] This is not to say that literary connections did not cross party lines. Congreve was a protégée of the Royalist Dryden; Alexander Pope was for some time on friendly terms with Addison and Steele, contributing seven papers to the *Guardian* and a prologue to Addison's *Cato* (1713). Nevertheless, male literary relations appeared to show the same pattern that we have witnessed with the female poets of *The Nine Muses*; the escalating party conflict particularly between 1710-1714 rendered it almost impossible for friendships to remain free of partisanship, as witnessed in the infamous 'pastoral war' between the Tory Pope and the Whiggish Ambrose Philips, which ended Pope's cordial relations with Addison and his 'Spectator circle'.

[10] Contemporary female authors of Whiggish loyalties include Trotter, Centlivre, Egerton, Pix, Piers, Elizabeth Singer Rowe, Elizabeth Thomas, Mary Chudleigh, Mary Davys, and of a slightly later generation, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Jane Brereton. The Tory (and possibly Jacobite) camp includes Manley, Mary Astell, Anne Finch, Elizabeth Elstob, Jane Barker and Judith Drake.

Egerton. They not only operated in the same literary networks but were active players in the ascendant Whig literary circles of the time. While their fellow poets from *The Nine Muses*, Mary Pix and Sarah Piers, were also Whiggish in their outlook, I have excluded them because Pix's politics were much less overt than those of her aforementioned colleagues, while Piers was a minor poet with a limited *oeuvre*. I trace the three women's relations with the Tory Manley, to explore the conflicting impulses between gender solidarity and political loyalties at a time of political volatility. Most significantly, I situate the three women writers within their immediate context of the political and literary world of the early eighteenth century, focusing on their engagement with and connections to the dominant Whig literary culture of the time, which inform their published and unpublished writings.

This study seeks to explore the following questions: to what extent did Whig political affiliations help foster conditions for women's writing during the bitterly partisan era known as 'The Rage of the Party'? How were the works of these women writers informed and enabled by the ideology, themes and motifs of an evolving Whig literary culture? What contributions did they make to the cultural and literary reformation of a new Whig political generation? To what extent does reinstating their overlooked contributions enhance our understanding of the richness and variety of literary Whiggism?

**Whig politics and the woman writer**

Scholars of early modern women's writing no longer take at face value William Walsh's injunction against women engaging in 'Learning and Politicks',[11] nor Mary Pix's feminine self-abasing claim that 'Matters of State, she'll not pretend to Teach;/ Or treat War, or things above her Reach'.[12] As Kathryn King rightly observes, 'the once widely held view that women declined public themes in favour of small, intimate, private concerns has been challenged in recent years by literary histories that emphasize the political origins and meaning of women's writing'.[13]

[11] William Walsh, *A Dialogue Concerning Women, Being a Defence of the Sex* [etc] (London, 1691), 32.
[12] Mary Pix, prologue to *The false friend* [etc] (London, 1699).
[13] Kathryn R. King, 'Political Verse and Satire: Monarchy, Party and Female Political Agency,' in *Women and Poetry, 1660-1750*, eds. Sarah Prescott and David E. Shuttleton (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 203.

Yet there still persists a critical tendency to emphasize 'feminine' literary expression of women's intimate and domestic affairs, including love, marriage and friendship. This is part of a long-held impulse of feminist criticism to privilege women's articulation of their lives and experiences as a way of challenging dominant patriarchal ideologies that constrain women's position, status and desires.[14] Ironically, however, this approach reinforces the narrow sphere of female influence endorsed by the patriarchal system that feminist critics are eager to critique. There remains a need to continue to expand the frame of reference of female authorship in order to appreciate the public and political underpinnings of women's writing. A case in point is Sarah Fyge Egerton; the dominant context used to interpret Egerton's writings remains the personal and marital details of her life. Scholarly attention on her *oeuvre* has also focused on Egerton's proto-feminist texts and her personal and domestic verse, while her party political poetry has been largely ignored.[15] As we shall see, attending to her neglected political verse produces a very different picture of Egerton's place in literary history, as a politically engaged writer whose attempts to inscribe herself onto the dominant literary practice of a nascent Whig culture parallels her feminist efforts to inscribe herself onto the new historical and political formulation upon which this culture is based. Attention to the ways in which Egerton draws upon Whiggish themes and rhetorical tropes to animate her feminist works also complicates our understanding of the origins of seventeenth-century proto-feminism, which has hitherto emphasized Tory polemicists such as Mary Astell and Judith Drake.

Women's discursive role in the public sphere has also been obscured by overly restrictive models of female literary authority, which privilege gynocentric traditions of literary lineage. In the treatment of early modern women writers, the figures of Katherine Philips and Aphra Behn loom large, and there is a tendency to polarize successive women writers into two opposing models of female authorship: a chaste, modest amateurism embodied by Philips ('Orinda'), and the sexually

[14] See feminist readings of Katherine Philips' friendship poems, seen as depictions of a feminine social world, for example: Dorothy Mermin, 'Women Becoming Poets: Katherine Philips, Aphra Behn, Anne Finch,' *English Literary History* 57 (Summer 1990): 335-55.

[15] For the only critique of Egerton's political poetry, see Carol Barash, *English Women's Poetry, 1649-1714: Politics, Community, and Linguistic Authority* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 245-50.

transgressive professional writer exemplified by Behn ('Astrea').[16] However this binary approach has distorted our understanding of the breadth and variety of female authorial identity, and obscured other important contexts for women's writing such as political loyalties and religious affiliations. The drawbacks of this binary model of virtue and vice are apparent when applied to the figure of Catharine Trotter. Trotter assumed the role of an assertive professional writer, who produced a number of plays for the post-Revolution theatre with all its connotations of licentiousness and vice. Yet she also successfully projected the literary persona of a virtuous woman writer and moral reformer of the eighteenth-century stage. It is one of the arguments of this thesis that Trotter effectively constructs an empowering authorial image, which combines female virtue and a public career as a playwright, by drawing upon the dominant Whiggish impulse for moral reform to project a feminised version of Whig civic virtue.

While recent scholarship has become increasingly attentive to recovering female political agency, major studies of early modern women's political writings remain largely focused on Royalist and Tory women writers. This is underpinned by Catherine Gallagher's provocative but influential thesis that the Royalist ideology of absolute monarchy provides a foundation for female authorial subjectivity through 'a transition to the ideology of the absolute self'.[17] Carol Barash's important critique of seventeenth and eighteenth-century women poets connects divine monarchical power with female linguistic authority. Barash posits the emergence of a Royalist or Tory 'women's poetic tradition' during 1649-1714, predicated on the basis that the symbolically potent figures of female monarchs justified women's incursions into the public literary sphere.[18] Hero Chalmers' study of seventeenth-century women writers is similarly based on the central thesis that Royalist political affiliations are crucial in enabling women to negotiate patriarchal strictures on female authorship.[19]

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[16] Readings employing this binary model of female authorship include: Marilyn Williamson, *Raising Their Voices: British Women Writers, 1650-1750* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990); and Jeslyn Medoff, 'The daughters of Behn and the problem of reputation,' in Grundy and Wiseman, *Women, Writing*, 33-54.

[17] Catherine Gallagher, 'Embracing the Absolute: The Politics of the Female Subject in Seventeenth-Century England,' *Genders* 1 (Spring 1988): 27.

[18] Barash, *Women's Poetry*.

[19] Hero Chalmers, *Royalist Women Writers, 1650-1689* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

These political readings have extended our knowledge of women's public discourse, providing valuable insights into the relations between gender, political loyalties and linguistic authority. Nonetheless, the privileging of Royalist and Tory political commitments has distorted our understanding of the variety and complexity of female political agency, including obscuring the contribution of women writers of Whiggish affiliations. In a perceptive survey of women's political verse of the late Stuart era, King concludes that 'there is no consistent link to be found between conservative political principles and female public mindedness or between a Tory frame of reference and feminist assertion […] [W]hat once appeared to be a natural link between feminism and royalism is in no small part a matter of history, political circumstance and possibly opportunism'.[20] King emphasizes the diversity of early modern women's political voice: '[t]hey declared themselves Tories, Whigs, and Jacobites; Anglicans, Catholics and dissenters. They lent their pens to a range of widely differing political interests, from the 'good old cause' of godly republicanism to the Jacobite cause of a Stuart restoration'.[21] King is surely correct to point out that women constituted a spectrum of political identities; greater attention needs to be paid to the variety of female political loyalties, in order to enrich and complicate our understanding of the ideological underpinnings of women's literary productions. This thesis takes as its focus the significant but neglected political writings of a group of contemporaneous Whiggish women writers: the circle of self-confident female wits, who emerged in the decades after the Glorious Revolution of 1688, and whose contributions to Whig ideology and aesthetics helped shape an emergent Whig culture. I investigate and explore the enabling impact of the ideology, themes and tropes of Whig literary culture, and the ways in which Whiggish political commitments enhanced women writers' abilities to conceive and establish themselves as authors in an androcentric culture.

This study, then, challenges the received view that Royalist or Tory political commitments are more conducive to female authorship. It also departs from the customary feminist emphasis on exclusively female traditions of lineage and influence, to assert a more open, engaged and inclusive

[20] King, 'Political Verse,' 220.
[21] Ibid., 203.

model of female authorship. While the three women writers' links with and influence on each other are given due consideration, the most significant contexts applied to their works are their engagement with contemporary political ideology and undercurrents, and their connections to the dynamic Whig literary-political networks of the day. This is not to underestimate the obstacles faced by early modern women writers, social, psychological and material; indeed, the inventive ways in which female authors negotiated a masculinist Whig culture is one of the interests of this thesis. However, to contextualize women's writing within a strictly feminocentric literary tradition and furthermore to limit their interest to a realm of purely private domestic concerns is to confine women writers in a false, 'feminine' ghetto protected from the contemporary currents, beliefs, and networks of their time.

As the findings of this study demonstrate, the three women writers were highly engaged with the socio-political culture and literary circles of the day. Their public writings and private letters reveal an acute awareness of political issues, national events, philosophical developments, and the profound social and cultural changes that impacted their world. They corresponded and interacted with political figures, as well as prominent literary men – at times to broaden their professional and artistic network, at other times to come to the support of an embattled public figure (including John Locke and the Duke of Marlborough). My focus on their political writings reveals that these women writers were intensely concerned with notions usually considered to occupy a 'masculine' domain: war, peace, martial heroism, finance and speculation. Thus my study participates in the concurrent critical shift to disrupt the gendered paradigm of 'separate spheres'; early modern political culture and literary sociability, as Sarah Prescott puts it, 'operated as a commerce between the sexes, not just as a one-way traffic between men'.[22] In what follows, I sketch the background and literary careers of the three women writers on whom this thesis concentrates. I then turn to explore and elaborate the definitions of Whiggism that inform this study.

[22] Sarah Prescott, introduction to *Women's Writing* 7, no. 3 (2000): 350.

**Catharine Trotter, Susanna Centlivre, and Sarah Fyge Egerton**

Catharine Trotter (1674?-1749), Susanna Centlivre (1669?-1723), and Sarah Fyge Egerton (1668-1723) belong to the same post-Revolution generation of writers. Their formative years were those surrounding the Glorious Revolution of 1688, and they pursued their literary careers during the politically tumultuous decades which spanned the reigns of William (1688-1702), Anne (1702-14), and (with the exception of Egerton whose last known work was produced in 1708) the early Hanoverian era.

Despite their common commitment to Whiggish politics, they came from very different backgrounds. Centlivre was most probably born into a dissenting family with strong Parliamentary leanings, whose fortunes, it has been claimed, suffered greatly during the Restoration.[23] She appeared to have had a difficult early life, attempting to make ends meet as a strolling actor until success as a playwright and marriage to Joseph Centlivre, a mid-ranking official in Queen Anne's privy kitchen, provided some measure of financial stability.[24] By contrast, Trotter came from a Royalist, gentry background with connections to Scottish nobility.[25] Her father's early death compelled her to earn a living by the pen, and attempts to procure a family pension for her mother brought her into contact with Bishop Gilbert Burnet and the circle surrounding the Duchess of Marlborough. Egerton was a member of a once landed gentry family who became London citizens; she was the daughter of Thomas Fyge, a prominent London citizen, who was a moderate dissenter and a Whig, and Egerton's family tree reveals a Fyge kinsman who had fought on the side of the parliamentarians during the Civil War.[26]

All three women began writing in their youth. Trotter published her first work at the age of eighteen, an epistolary novella – *The Adventures of a Young Lady* (1693) – and made her playwriting debut with *Agnes de Castro* (1696) two years later in December 1695. Egerton gained youthful notoriety through the publication of a feminist polemic, the *Female Advocate* (1686), which

[23] See Giles Jacob, 'Mrs Susanna Centlivre,' in *The Poetical Register* [etc] (London, 1719), 32.
[24] See Bowyer, *Mrs. Centlivre*, 11-12.
[25] Trotter's mother, Sarah Ballenden was related to Lord Ballenden, the Earl of Perth, and the Duke of Lauderdale and Drummond; see Birch, 'Life,' ii.
[26] For further details on Egerton's Whiggish family background, see pp.155-7.

was composed, as she claims, when she was 'Scarce fourteen'.[27] Less convincingly perhaps, Centlivre's eighteenth-century biographers claim that she had composed a song 'before she was Seven Years old', which was subsequently set to a tune that became a distinguished country dance.[28]

The three women writers became known to one another through theatrical circles and they collaborated in the production of *The Nine Muses.* They also formed other connections with the literary and political world of the time. Centlivre had links and friendships with prominent Whig writers, including George Farquhar, Richard Steele, Nicholas Rowe, Abel Boyer and Ambrose Philips. Trotter was a friend and protégé of the Whig dramatist, William Congreve, and she was closely acquainted with George Farquhar. She was also associated with the Marlborough-Godolphin circles, as well as Bishop Gilbert Burnet and his wife, Elizabeth. Egerton not only had links with the theatrical community but connections to contemporary intellectual circles; she was related by marriage to Locke's close companion, Damaris Masham, who was also the daughter of the Cambridge Platonist, Ralph Cudworth. All these connections are explored more fully in this thesis, as they provide an important but so far neglected context to our understanding of these women's writings.

Centlivre is the most prominent literary figure of the group. Author of sixteen plays and three short farces, as well as prose works and poetry, in a career that spanned from 1700 to 1722, Centlivre was the most prolific and one of the most popular playwrights of the early eighteenth century.[29] Comedy was her *metier* and three of Centlivre's most popular comedies, *The Busie Body* (1709), *The Wonder: A Woman Keeps a Secret* (1714), and *A Bold Stroke for a Wife* (1718), continued to be performed well into the nineteenth century. The highly successful *The Busie Body*

[27] Sarah Fyge Egerton, 'To the Lady Campbell, with a Female Advocate,' in *Poems on Several Occasions, Together with a Pastoral* (London, 1703), 22.
[28] See Jacob, 'Centlivre,' 32; and 'Address to the World,' in *The Works of the Celebrated Mrs. Centlivre. With a New Account of her Life* (London, 1760), xi.
[29] See Susan Staves, *A Literary History of Women's Writing in Britain, 1660-1789* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 155.

achieved an impressive 450 performances before 1800 and continued in revivals until 1897.[30]

Catharine Trotter's career as a playwright comprised the production of five plays (four tragedies and a comedy) for the London stage between 1695 and 1706. Her greatest stage success was the verse tragedy, *Fatal Friendship* (1698), produced to critical acclaim from her contemporaries.[31] However most of her plays enjoyed modest initial runs and were not revived, with the exception of the comedy, *Love at a Loss* (1701), which has been staged in a number of modern productions in the twentieth century.[32] Trotter was probably the most intellectually engaged of our group of women writers and she was prolific in other genres too, composing poetry, songs, fictional prose works, and philosophical treatises. Although she stopped writing for the stage after the production of her last play, *The Revolution of Sweden* (1706), Trotter continued to produce philosophical works and poetry until her death in 1749.

Egerton was primarily a poet and polemicist, known in contemporary and modern circles for her proto-feminist views. Her verse polemic, the *Female Advocate*, gained her a fair amount of public attention, going through three editions in 1686, 1687, 1706. She contributed both to *The Nine Muses* and *Luctus Britannici*, the latter as one of only two female contributors, amongst over fifty male poets. The most complete representation of her poetic range is her published volume, *Poems on Several Occasions, Together with a Pastoral* (1703), reissued in 1706. Egerton also authored a little-known unpublished manuscript poem to the Duke of Marborough in 1708, a work which embodies her distinctive response to Whig poetics.[33]

This thesis contends that the political valence of these women writers' works has not gained the attention it deserves. Although Centlivre's ardent Whiggism is well known, it has not been extensively used as a framework for her writings. Centlivre is most often compared with her predecessor, the Tory Aphra Behn, as in the book-length studies by Nancy Copeland and Annette

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[30] Jacqueline Pearson, introduction to *Susanna Centlivre*, vol. 3 of *Eighteenth-Century Women Playwrights*, ed. Derek Hughes (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2001), x.

[31] See Anne Kelley, introduction to *Mary Pix and Catharine Trotter*, vol. 2 of Hughes, *Eighteenth-Century Women Playwrights*, xxii.

[32] Ibid., xxvii

[33] See Egerton's 'The Essay Address'd to the Illustrious prince and Duke of Marlboro after the long Campaigne 1708' (unpublished manuscript, 1708).

Kreis-Schinck, which focus on sexual politics in Behn's and Centlivre's drama.[34] The tendency to cast Centlivre as Behn's successor conceals their partisan differences, and hence party political readings of her work remain relatively rare. Notable exceptions include the historian Hannah Smith's account of Centlivre's religio-political concerns and her Whiggish response to 'the High Church threat to the post-Revolutionary Church of England and Protestant Succession'.[35] Smith also includes Centlivre's drama in her critique of Whiggish pro-army plays in the context of the standing army debate, pinpointing that Centlivre 'insisted on the […] superiority, of military rank to all others'.[36] Smith argues that pro-army plays 'situated female patriotism within a romantic, domestic context', observing that Centlivre's heroines regularly reject wealthy, aristocratic suitors ('Tories') in favour of patriotic army officers ('Whigs').[37] Other political critiques of Centlivre's drama examine her treatment of marriage in relation to a Lockean social contract.[38] Political readings of Centlivre's plays, then, privilege her concerns with marriage, courtship and a domestic paradigm. While critics have highlighted Centlivre's espousal of a so-called 'middle-class Whig ethic', her interest in Whig commercial virtues and the culture of 'politeness' has yet to be acknowledged.[39] Centlivre's public verse, which probably provides the best insight into her response to the intense partisan dialogue of the day, has received little critical attention.

The most complete exploration of Trotter's work is Anne Kelley's fine book-length study which focuses on Trotter's feminocentrism and system of rational morality.[40] But while Kelley acknowledges that 'Trotter aligns herself firmly with the Marlboroughs and the Whig political

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[34] Annette Kreis-Schinck, *Women, Writing, and the Theatre in the Early Modern Period: The Plays of Aphra Behn and Suzanne* [*sic*] Centlivre (Madison, NJ: Farleigh Dickson University Press, 2001); Nancy Copeland, *Staging Gender in Behn and Centlivre: Women's Comedy and the Theatre* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2004).

[35] Hannah Smith, 'Susanna Centlivre, "Our *Church*'s Safety" and "Whig Feminism,"' in *Religion and Women in Britain, c.1660-1760*, eds. Sarah Apetrei and Hannah Smith (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 148.

[36] Hannah Smith, 'Politics, Patriotism, and Gender: The Standing Army Debate on the English Stage, circa 1689—1720,' *Journal of British Studies* 50, no. 1 (2011): 69.

[37] Ibid., 69-70.

[38] See, for example, Misty G. Anderson, *Female Playwrights and Eighteenth-Century Comedy: Negotiating Marriage on the London Stage* (New York; Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 109-38.

[39] Butler argues that 'Centlivre's plays are a dramatic fulfilment of Whig philosophy' based on his reading of a 'middle-class ethic in operation'; Douglas R. Butler, 'Plot and Politics in Susanna Centlivre's "*A Bold Stroke for a Wife*,"' in *Curtain Calls*: *British and American Women and the Theatre, 1660-1820,* eds. Mary Anne Schofield and Cecilia Macheski (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1991), 363.

[40] Anne Kelley, *Catharine Trotter: An Early Modern Writer in the Vanguard of Feminism* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002).

philosophy', she does not explore how Trotter's Whiggish affiliations might inform her work.[41] Critical attention on Trotter has been largely concerned with her depiction of female friendship and her moral philosophy.[42] Renewed political interest in Trotter's tragedy, *The Revolution of Sweden*, has primarily focused on her engagement with a Lockean-contractarian notion of government, without due attention to the immediate historical context of the war on the continent, the more complex development of Whig ideology beyond Lockean contractarianism, and the co-existence of contemporary Whiggish military plays, which share an explicit civic concern at a time of military conflict.[43] Trotter's role as a patriotic war poet through her panegyrics to Marlborough has received scant critical attention.

Of the three women writers, Egerton remains the most enigmatic figure, and her reputation has suffered most from the assumption that women's public self-constructions reflect their private domestic lives. The most extensive, albeit unpublished, critique of Egerton's writings by Jeslyn Medoff considers her work as 'encoded poetic autobiography'.[44] The only two journal articles exclusively addressing Egerton's writings examine her poetry in a similar context of the personal and marital details of her life.[45] Little attention has been paid to her Whiggish affiliations, her social connections and literary influences, and her public poems which address a number of public and political figures of the day. Although Egerton's Whiggish loyalties have been acknowledged, some critics continue to mistakenly categorize her partisan affiliations, as in the case of Karen O'Brien who

[41] Ibid., 94.

[42] See, Jane Marsden, *Fatal Desire: Women, Sexuality, and the English Stage, 1660-1720* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 112-20; Kathryn J. Ready, 'Damaris Cudworth Masham, Catharine Trotter Cockburn, and the Feminist Legacy of Locke's Theory of Personal Identity,' *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 35, no. 4 (2002): 563-76.

[43] For Trotter's engagement with contractarian ideology, see Elizabeth Sund, 'The Right to Resist: Women's Citizenship in Catharine Trotter Cockburn's *The Revolution of Sweden*,' in *Political ideas of Enlightenment Women: Virtue and Citizenship,* eds. Lisa Curtis-Wendlandt, Paul Richard Gibbard, and Karen Green (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 141-56; and Gunnar Sorelius, 'Catharine Trotter's *The Revolution of Sweden (*1706). A Libertarian drama about Gustavus Vasa,' *Annales Societatis Litterarum Humaniorum Regiae Upsaliensis* (1977): 50-75.

[44] Jeslyn Medoff, '"My Daring Pen": The Autobiographical Poetry of Sarah Fyge (Field, Egerton), (1668-1723)' (PhD thesis, Rutgers University, 1994), ii.

[45] Jeslyn Medoff, 'New Light on Sarah Fyge (Field, Egerton),' *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 1, no. 2 (1982): 155-75; Michael Genovese, '"Profess as Much as I": Dignity as Authority in the Poetry of Sarah Fyge Egerton,' *Eighteenth Century* 51, nos. 1-2 (2010): 45-66.

sees Egerton as committed to the 'political ideologies of the […] Tory or Jacobite parties'.[46]

This thesis seeks to foreground these women writers' Whiggish sympathies, networks and connections as a significant imperative of their work. This is not to say that politics determined every aspect of their literary endeavours, nor that political allegiances were the sole or even the most important component of their authorial identities. But factoring in these women's Whiggish commitments and connections reveals a crucial dimension to their writings and to the shaping of their female literary agency which has not received the attention it deserves. It also sheds valuable light on these women's neglected contributions to the evolution of an emergent Whig culture.

**Politics and aesthetics: early Whig literary culture**

My central assertion that our three women writers were active players in a dynamic Whig cultural enterprise is predicated on and greatly indebted to ground-breaking scholarship on literary Whiggism, which has revealed the existence of a vital and distinct Whig literary culture, long occluded by a Tory-inflected notion of literary history and value. Pioneering criticism by David Womersley, Christine Gerrard and Abigail Williams has transformed our understanding of eighteenth-century Whig culture, as a 'self-consciously modern programme'[47] that celebrated and promoted Revolution principles, as well as Whig cultural values.[48] Womersley draws our attention to the Whiggish modernizing project of the 1690s and 1700s, borne out of the ideological imperatives of the Glorious Revolution and the profound transformation of the nation's financial and political life, which accompanied the radical restructuring of public finance which funded the massive war commitments on the continent. He identifies the distinctive features of a nascent Whig poetics: the repudiation of classical machinery in favour of native literary models; the mythologization of William

[46] Karen O'Brien, 'The feminist critique of Enlightenment,' in *The Enlightenment World*, eds. Martin Fitzpatrick, Peter Jones, Christa Knellwolf, and Ian McCalman (London: Routledge, 2004), 624.
[47] David Womersley, ed., *Augustan Critical Writing* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1997), xiv.
[48] See Womersley, *Augustan*; Christine Gerrard, *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole: Politics, Poetry, and National Myth 1725-1742* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); Abigail Williams, *Poetry and the Creation of a Whig Literary Culture 1681-1714* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); and David Womersley, ed., *"Cultures of Whiggism": New Essays on Literature and History in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005). For early Whig cultural politics, see Lawrence E. Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness: Moral Discourse and Cultural Politics in Early Eighteenth-century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

III, the warrior-king; the advancement of national and military events as the central focus of the poetical agenda; and the extension of Whig notions of political liberty into the realms of aesthetics and poetry.[49] Central to this account of Whig poetic evolution is the generic emphasis on bloodthirsty, war panegyrics memorably described by Womersley as the 'Battle Hymns of the Junto Whigs'.[50]

Focusing on a later period than that with which my thesis is concerned, Gerrard's important critique of the literary culture of the dissident or 'Patriot' opposition to Walpole takes us to the mid-eighteenth century in its focus on the relations between patriotism, politics and poetry between 1725 and 1742.[51] Gerrard recovers Whig literary agency and endeavour in a long period of Whig hegemony, during which the Whigs had splintered into opposition to Walpole's oligarchy, drawing their poetic energies from the political and cultural figurehead of Frederick, the Prince of Wales.

Overlapping the period with which my thesis is concerned, Abigail Williams' study of Whig literary culture is a systematic exploration of Whig cultural formation, spanning from the Exclusion Crisis to the accession of George I.[52] Williams investigates the significant themes and motifs of an evolving Whiggish poetics, to explain the political underpinnings of a distinctly Whiggish cultural endeavour: 'a dynamic and in many ways revolutionary project to remodel cultural and political life'.[53] Her reading includes an illuminating account of the workings of a sophisticated system of Whig patronage through which the Whig ruling classes stamped the cultural authority of their new political order.

These studies of literary Whiggism of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries reveal a dynamic, politicized literary world populated by influential male writers, including Charles Montagu, Richard Blackmore, John Dennis, Joseph Addison, Richard Steele, Thomas Tickell and Ambrose Philips. These readings, however, focus almost exclusively on the works of male literary figures; furthermore their investigations reveal a highly androcentric cultural framework, both with

[49] Womersley, *Augustan,* xviii-xxxi.
[50] Ibid., xxiii.
[51] Gerrard, *Patriot Opposition*.
[52] Williams, *Literary Culture*.
[53] Ibid., 15.

regard to its literary themes and motifs (war, heroism, martial violence) and its system of literary patronage in which the exchange of literary productions for official positions and sinecures must necessarily exclude women writers, who were barred from holding government positions on account of their gender.[54] Similarly, Whig social networks such as the Kit-Cat Club, a vital instrument of Whig cultural politics, were homosocial circles that preclude the membership of women.

This poses the obvious questions: how does this dominant, masculinist literary world square with what we know of the flowering of women's writing of the period, a material proportion of which was political in nature and produced by female authors with Whiggish affiliations? How can we reconcile the vision of a male 'republic of letters' with the role of Whiggish women writers who were colleagues and friends of the same male literary figures emphasized in studies of literary Whiggism? A highly problematic issue is the notion of a homosocial Whiggish patronage network which would not appear to be able to accommodate women writers.

Some answers are provided by Sarah Prescott in her insightful reading of Elizabeth Singer Rowe's early career as a Williamite poet.[55] Prescott considers Rowe's Whiggish politics to have shaped her authorial identity at the beginning of her literary career as a Williamite supporter. Although she operated apart from the mainstream Whig patronage system, Rowe drew strength from the Nonconformist community to which she belonged, particularly gaining crucial support from John Dunton's Whig periodical, the *Athenian Mercury* (1691-97), which showcased her verse and burnished her image as a female national bard. As Prescott demonstrates, Rowe's poetic contributions were vital to the success of Dunton's periodical, embodying the mutually beneficial relationship between a woman writer and a Whig publisher. As did that of her male Whig contemporaries, Rowe's patriotic verse engages with the masculinist tropes of war and heroism, but in a way that conformed to expectations of feminine piety, including through the employment of biblical models which enabled Rowe to dramatize martial violence while assuming a pious and

[54] Ibid., 138.
[55] Sarah Prescott, 'Elizabeth Singer Rowe: Gender, Dissent, and Whig Poetics,' in Womersley, *"Cultures of Whiggism,"* 173-99.

detached perspective.[56] As the case of Rowe demonstrates, Whig literary culture was more diverse and complex than is suggested by strictly homosocial accounts of a male republic of letters, whereby a symbiotic relationship between Whig grandees and partisan writers (some of whom shifted easily between both roles) enabled and supported Whig poetic endeavour. The same point is apparent in Gerrard's study of the lively literary circle surrounding the Whig writer, Aaron Hill, in the 1720s, which included and supported women writers such as Eliza Haywood and Martha Fowke.[57] My thesis seeks to reinstate women writers in the Whiggish literary landscape to provide a richer, more complex picture of the breadth and variety of the Whig cultural programme than has been previously conceived.

Alert to the homosocial nature of the dominant Whig patronage system, this study explores the ways in which women writers gained vital support from a diversity of sources; at the same time I demonstrate the significance of their Whiggish loyalties in soliciting that support. Isobel Grundy has argued for the importance of 'micro-climates favourable to women' for providing firm pockets of support for female literary endeavours.[58] As she explains, these oases of support in an otherwise unfavourable climate for women's writing include families, literary coteries, court culture, the theatre or the emerging culture of periodicals (the latter as we have seen was instrumental to Rowe's early career).[59] As discussed, the three women writers benefitted from the female literary network of 'The Nine Muses'. My reading also investigates the ways in which they navigated the dominant centre of patronage by courting the favour of public officials and established male writers through correspondence, dedications and commendatory poems – favours which take the form of family pensions, money, gifts, and professional and artistic support for the publication of their writings or production of their drama. Although women may have been excluded from the exchange system of 'literature for positions', they still participated, albeit in a more marginal way, in the Whig cultural arena funded by government largesse and centred on the axis of Whig statesmen as patrons.

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[56] Ibid., 182-4.
[57] Christine Gerrard, *Aaron Hill: The Muses' Projector, 1685-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
[58] Isobel Grundy, 'The Poet as Poetess,' in *The Oxford Handbook of British Poetry, 1660-1800,* ed. Jack Lynch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 253.
[59] Ibid., 253-4.

Most significantly, this thesis emphasizes the post-Revolution theatre as a vital source of support for women writers, functioning as an important centre of Whig cultural endeavour, which included the participation of women. My reading investigates how the contemporary stage provided women writers with a valuable network of patrons, friends and colleagues, which supported and underpinned their literary careers. I also focus on the useful traffic between the theatrical industry and poetic production, which further enabled women's writings. In *The Nine Muses*, we witness how women's dramatic and poetic careers intersect: Manley enlisted her connections from theatrical circles for the poetic project (Trotter, Pix), who in turn approached their other literary friends (Trotter approached her patron and friend, Piers, as evidenced in extant letters).[60] Pix most probably enlisted her protégée, the aspiring playwright, Centlivre. Egerton, a poet and polemicist, did not write for the theatre but was closely acquainted with Manley and had other links with theatrical circles which her work and other accounts testify.[61]

The studies of literary Whiggism discussed thus far focus almost exclusively on the genre of poetry; however there was a vital and thriving theatrical industry in the post-Revolution era, underpinned by the reopening of a second theatre at Lincoln's Inn Fields in 1695, and the establishment of the Queen's Theatre in the Haymarket in 1705, the latter sponsored by the Whig Kit-Cat Club and designed by the Whig playwright and architect, John Vanbrugh. As the role of the Kit-Cat Club suggests, the contemporary stage was in many ways a Whiggish enterprise. The post-Revolution stage was patronized by Whig statesmen and dominated by Whiggish playwrights, stage managers and patent holders. Notwithstanding the Whig hegemony of the contemporary stage, little sustained attention has been given to the Whiggish inflections of dramatic output of the period, and

[60] Trotter appears to have assumed the role of a mediator through whom Manley's overtures to Piers were made. See an unpublished, undated letter from Piers to Trotter, in which Piers asks Trotter to convey her gratitude to Manley for her 'gentile complement'; Correspondence of Sara, wife of Sir George Piers, with C. Trotter, Cockburn Papers, MS Add. 4264, ff. 291-3, British Library, London.

[61] For further details, see p.51. My reading of the industry networks of *The Nine Muses* is indebted to Keown; Kathleen Keown, '"An excuse for their *performance"*: Reconsidering *The Nine Muses*,' (MSt dissertation, University of Oxford, 2013).

the theatre's contributions to Whig cultural formation.[62] This thesis seeks to restore an understanding of the post-Revolution theatre as a vital part of the Whig cultural project, exploring the ideological underpinnings of dramatic productions, as well as the dynamic interactions between the largely Whiggish theatrical players including female playwrights. Thus this project departs from the dominant focus on Whig poetics to consider both drama and poetry as equally important genres of Whig cultural production. I demonstrate how the output of the post-Revolution stage directly engages with the overriding concerns of an emergent Whig culture: the reformation of manners and refashioning of 'virtue'; the affirmation of Whig notions of liberty and patriotism at a time of war; the defence of commercial virtues in a period of revolutionary financial upheaval. As does my analysis of women's poetic productions, I emphasize dominant, 'masculine' Whiggish themes of war, heroism and commerce, to illuminate significant aspects of women's drama beyond the usual critical focus on the marriage contract and a domestic paradigm.

**The varieties of Whiggism**

Studies of literary Whiggism have revealed the existence of a dynamic Whig literary culture, which propounded 'a national identity founded on ideas of Protestantism, militarism, and modernity'.[63] Yet the ways in which political ideology is refracted in literature is complicated by the variety and complexity of early Whig politics which belie any simple binary opposition between 'Whig' and 'Tory'. Whiggism of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries was not a monolithic ideology, nor party, nor set of principles, any more than Toryism was. Within the wider commitment to the Revolution and a Protestant succession, Whiggism reflected a range of ideological positions that evolved through time or co-existed at any one time. The picture is further complicated by cross-party friendships, and the often-shifting political allegiances of political figures and writers, which can blur the boundaries between Whig and Tory. A contemporary commentator observes the bewildering complexity of allegiances: there are 'State Whigs and Church Whigs, State Tories and Church

[62] A notable exception is Loftis' study of eighteenth-century political drama; John Loftis, *Politics of Drama In Augustan England* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963).
[63] Christine Gerrard, 'Poems on Politics,' in Lynch, *Oxford Handbook*, 292.

Tories, King William's Tories and King James' Tories, Court Whigs and Country Whigs'.[64] Whiggism as grounded in cultural and literary practice, then, was less a commitment to a fixed set of ideological principles than a response to a shifting and multivalent political grouping or set of allegiances.

My thesis is alert to the complexity and variety of Whig ideology, eschewing simplistic oppositional fallacies that still appear in political readings of early modern literature, including the equation of Whiggism with a strictly Lockean contractarian ideology and an impulse for 'bourgeois mercantilism', and Toryism with an 'aristocratic', anti-trade orientation.[65] The Revolution Principles of 1689 which form the bedrock of Whig politics and culture were not a cohesive ideology of Lockean contractarianism but formed what Daniel Defoe aptly described as a 'skein of tangled principles',[66] comprising a diverse mixture of appeals to historical precedents, divine law, natural law and the right of self-preservation used to justify the Revolution.[67] The common association of Whiggism with the values of 'bourgeois mercantilism' is problematized by the elite, oligarchic nature of the Whig Junto (in any case, as Lisa Freeman points out, a coherent bourgeois ideology was not in place until the nineteenth century).[68] My discussion on the commercial concerns of Centlivre's gaming plays is alert to the subtleties of progressive Whig ideology, and the culture of 'politeness', which promotes social complementarity and dependence rather than a hostile opposition between landed and mercantile interests. In the next section, I sketch out the variety and complexity of Whig ideology through a survey of the evolution of early Whig politics.

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[64] *The Dangers of Europe from the Growing Power of France* (1701) in *A Collection of State Tracts, Publish'd on Occasion of the Late Revolution in 1688* [etc](London, 1705-7), 3:351.

[65] See for example, Kreis-Schinck's contention that Centlivre endorsed 'middle class Whiggish values' and 'social concerns that stand in opposition to aristocratic modes of life'; Kreis-Schinck, *Women, Writing,* 101.

[66] Daniel Defoe, *A New Test of the Church of England's Loyalty* (1700) in *A Collection of Scarce and Valuable Tracts…of the Late Lord Somers*, ed. Walter Scott (London, 1809-15), 9:577.

[67] See J.P. Kenyon, *Revolution Principles: The Politics of Party 1688-1702* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), chaps. 2-4. See too J.C.D. Clark, *English society 1688-1832: Ideology, Social Structure and Political Practice during the Ancien Regime* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), chap. 3.

[68] Lisa Freeman, *Character's Theater: Genre and Identity on the Eighteenth-Century English Stage* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 88.

## Whig and Tory 1678-1714[69]

The language of party and the terms 'Whig' and 'Tory' emerged out of the Exclusion Crisis of 1678-83, during which a powerful political faction, led by Anthony Ashley Cooper, the first Earl of Shaftesbury, attempted to exclude the Catholic James, Duke of York, from the succession to the throne.[70] The impulses and debates surrounding the notion of exclusion crystalized into two opposing political camps: the exclusionist, anti-Catholic opponents of 'arbitrary government' increasingly known as 'Whigs', and defenders of the *status quo* known as 'Tories'. The labels 'Whig' and 'Tory' were pejorative terms, originating from the Celtic fringe and first used by partisans to tar their political enemies. 'Whiggamore' is a term used for Scottish Presbyterians rebels, while 'Tory' is derived from the Irish Gaelic *toraidhe,* meaning a Catholic outlaw or brigand.[71]

'The First Whigs' of the exclusion era were by no means a homogenous body, and encompassed a spectrum of groups and ideologues, including Parliamentary constitutionalists (who maintained that Parliament enjoyed a large share of legislative power in a mixed monarchy, in which sovereignty was shared by the King, Lords and Commons); radicals and even republicans (who saw Exclusion as a preliminary for more radical reforms); and conservative elements intent on preserving a strong monarchy under a Protestant king.[72] The constitutionalist position was articulated by Shaftesbury in his assertion that 'The Parliament of England is that Supreme and absolute Power which gives Life and motion to the English Government'.[73] Shaftesbury also numbered amongst 'Country politicians' who supported Exclusion, those who had earlier deployed a neo-Harringtonian discourse in the 1670s to criticize the centralization of power at Charles II's court.[74] Underpinning the

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[69] There are numerous critical disagreements on the nature of early Whig politics; my survey is based on the consensus opinion but highlights important scholarly differences where relevant to the argument of this thesis.

[70] Mark Goldie, 'The Roots of True Whiggism 1688-94,' *History of Political Thought* 1, no. 2 (Summer 1980): 195.

[71] See R. Willman, 'The Origins of "Whig" and "Tory" in English Political Language,' *Historical Journal* 17 (1974): 251-2.

[72] See Tim Harris, *Politics Under the Later Stuarts: Party Conflict in a Divided Society 1660-1715* (London: Longman, 1993), 80-108.

[73] Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third Earl of Shaftesbury, *Some Observations Concerning the Regulating of Elections for Parliament* [etc] (London, 1689), 5.

[74] See J.G.A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 226. For the discourse of neo-Harringtonian civic humanism, see J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), chaps. 12-14. Pocock's influential thesis has received critical reassessments; see

exclusionary movement was a deep suspicion of popery and the belief that a Catholic king, unable to rely on the support of his Protestant subjects, would be compelled to govern in an arbitrary and despotic manner. The Tories too were anti-Catholic, but generally upheld the principles of divine right and indefeasible hereditary succession which prevented them from interfering with the royal line of succession.[75] A clear point of division between Whig and Tory is the issue of the Church; while the Whigs were sympathetic to Dissent, the Tories were a party of intolerant Anglicanism who believed that toleration would undermine the integrity of the Church of England. Underpinning their defence of the *status quo* for both the royal succession and the Church was the Tories' association of Whigs and dissenters with republicans and 'rabble-rousers', whose ultimate objective was perceived to be the destruction of the Church and State as established by the law.[76]

During the Exclusion era, the Whigs were in many ways a populist movement; a material part of the Whig power base originated from the urban mercantile population (a number of whom were dissenters), who had long been hostile to Charles II's pro-French and anti-Dutch foreign policy.[77] These political tensions played out in the Tory 'cit-comedies' of the early 1680s, such as Aphra Behn's *The City Heiress* (1682) and Thomas D'Urfey's *Sir Barnaby Whigg* (1681), which associated Puritan hypocrisy with archetypal Whig mercantilism.[78]

However, the group of 'Revolution Whigs' who dominated politics in the post-Revolution era was a very different political animal – led by the four lords known as the Junto, this party was 'oligarchic, commercialist and committed to extensive executive power'.[79] Mainstream Whiggism became increasingly disassociated from radicalism and from traditional Whig/Country hostility to the centralization of authority in an overpowerful court. Whig officials retreated from the populism of the 1680s, resulting in popular urban support shifting away from the Whigs towards the Tories (as later

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Jesse R. Goodale, 'J.G.A Pocock's Neo-Harringtonians: A Reconsideration,' *History of Political Thought* 1, no. 2 (summer 1980): 237-59; and J.A.W. Gunn, 'Republican Virtue Reconsidered; or, A Sop to Cerberus,' in *The Political Imagination in History: Essays concerning J.G.A. Pocock*, ed. D.N. DeLuna (Baltimore: Archangel Foundation, 2006), 101-28.

[75] Harris, *Politics*, 94-96.

[76] Ibid., 97.

[77] Williams, *Literary Culture*, 71.

[78] See Susan J. Owen, 'Restoration Drama and Politics: An Overview,' in *A Companion to Restoration Drama*, ed. Susan J. Owen (Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 132.

[79] Goldie, 'True Whiggism,' 195.

evidenced by London protests in favour of Henry Sacheverell in 1710 and the growth of popular urban Jacobitisim).[80] As Charles Davenant observed in 1701, establishment Whigs had 'very much departed from the principles [they] professed twenty years ago'.[81] The Junto was highly committed to William III's continental policies in the Nine Years War (1688-97) against France, and throughout the 1690s, effected a radical transformation of the system of public debt and finance, the so-called 'Financial Revolution' that funded the massive war efforts on the continent. In reaction, the 1690s also witnessed the resurgence of a neo-Harringtonian, republican Whiggism through an oppositional group of radical Whigs led by the deist John Toland.[82] These 'Country Whigs' joined forces with Robert Harley's Country party to oppose William's proposed peacetime standing army, seen as an instrument of arbitrary power.[83]

An important ideological development in the Revolutionary era was the drive for moral reformation. As Dudley Bahlman has shown, a dominant post-Revolution Whig narrative was intensely concerned with the fashioning of William and Mary as divinely ordained agents of moral and religious renewal, a crucial component of the new regime's assertion of legitimacy and authority.[84] The resultant nationwide impulse for moral reform had a significant impact on the social and cultural life in the post-Revolution period, including on the contemporary theatre, an issue I will explore further in my chapter on the post-Revolution Whig stage.

The evolution of Whig politics in the reign of Anne was coloured by the bitter partisan strife which raged around the intertwining issues of religion, money and war. The period witnessed a revival of High Church Anglicanism – buoyed by the accession of a fervently Anglican queen – providing the Tories with a powerful spiritual rallying point, which they capitalized on in their 'Church in Danger' propaganda (and later in the Sacheverell affair). A major target for the alliance between High Church divines and the Tories was the dissenting community, who formed an important

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[80] Gary Stuart De Krey, *A Fractured Society. The Politics of London in the First Age of Party, 1688–1715* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 177-212.
[81] Charles Davenant, *The True Picture of a Modern Whig* [etc] (London, 1701), 33.
[82] Goldie 'True Whiggism,' 196.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Dudley W. Bahlman, *The Moral Revolution of 1688* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957). See too Tony Claydon, *William III and the Godly Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

component of Whig support; the Tories sought to contain the growing influence of dissenters by attempting to introduce successive parliamentary bills to end the practice of occasional conformity (whereby Nonconformists were able to qualify for civil office through occasional attendance at Anglican communion).[85] By contrast, the Whigs were known as the 'Low Church' party and continued to be critical of High Anglican intolerance while promoting religious tolerance for all Protestants. Nevertheless, the Whigs compromised their position on toleration when they supported a successful Occasional Conformity Bill in 1711, a political *quid pro quo* to win the support of the Tory Lord Nottingham against the Tory peace policy.[86]

The period was also defined by one military context – the War of the Spanish Succession (1702-13) – a major European conflict in which Britain battled against France on the side of the Grand Alliance. The Whigs were highly committed to the war, which was seen as crucial to contain the ambition of Catholic France and preserve the balance of power in Europe. At the heart of their commitment was the need to safeguard the Protestant Hanoverian Succession as enacted in the Act of Settlement of 1701 in the light of Louis XIV's recognition of the Stuart Pretender's claims to the throne. The Tories too supported the war, at least in its early years, and it was a Tory-controlled House of Commons that committed Britain to war in 1701. However, the Tories favoured a 'blue-water' strategy that emphasized naval operations and became deeply critical of Marlborough's and the Whigs' ambitious continental land strategy.[87] A major ground of Tory opposition to the management of the war was the exorbitant cost, which they argued was disproportionately borne by the landed gentry through the levy of high wartime taxation on land.

Thus during Anne's reign, the Country discourse became monopolized by the Tories, who cast themselves as guardians of the 'landed interest' (the rural gentry and freeholders) against the encroachments of the 'monied interest' (an alliance of urban dissent with powerful financial and

[85] Harris, *Politics*, 153.
[86] Ibid., 155.
[87] For differing Tory and Whig approaches to the conduct of the war, see Anne Somerset, *Queen Anne: The Politics of Passion* (London: Harper, 2012), 196-7; and Harris, *Politics*, 159-61.

military interest), associated with the Whigs.[88] Unlike the situation of the 1680s, however, polemical attacks on Whig-aligned 'monied interest' were not primarily focused on the mercantile, trading population but on a new breed of financiers, speculators and stockjobbers – creatures of the emergent speculative economy that underpinned the fiscal-monetary state. In this partisan narrative, the Whiggish 'monied interest' was cast as unscrupulous war-profiteers who benefitted at the expense of the landed gentry subject to disproportionately high land taxes to fund the cost of the war. As the High Tory, Henry St John, contends: '[t]he whole burden of this [military] charge' was borne by 'the landed interest during the whole time', and the result was that 'a new interest has been created out of their fortunes and a sort of property which was not known twenty years ago is now increased to be almost equal to the *Terra Firma* of our island'.[89]

The period also witnessed a decisive turn towards a modern progressive Whiggism, which defended Whig social, cultural and commercial values. Against the erosion of moral and political trust in the wake of the High Church-Country onslaught, the Whigs affirmed the virtues of an emergent commercial society and urban modernity through a transformative code of commerce and manners. Whig intellects and ideologues, including Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third Earl of Shaftesbury, Daniel Defoe, Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, were all deeply involved in crafting the language of a Whiggish politics of manners.[90] For example, through their influential periodicals, *The Tatler* (1709-11), *The Spectator* (1711-14) and *The Guardian* (1713), Addison and Steele espoused a paradigm of civilized refinement and 'politeness' as the bedrock of urban and commercial life. The cultivation of taste, manners and true friendships, they assert, can overcome the hypocrisy and corruption inherent in modern commercial life, and encourage the principles of

[88] See Pocock, *Virtue,* 234.

[89] Henry St John to the Earl of Orrery, 9 July 1709, Contemporary Copies of Letters of Henry St. John, Secretary of State, MSS Eng. lett. e. 4, Eng. misc. e. 180, ff. 4-5, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

[90] Lawrence Klein, 'Property and Politeness in the early eighteenth-century Whig moralists: the case of *The Spectator*,' in *Early Modern Conceptions of* Property, eds. John Brewer and Susan Staves (London: Routledge, 1995), 221. Peltonen, however, argues that politeness was not an exclusively Whiggish concept; Markku Peltonen, 'Politeness and Whiggism, 1688-1732,' *Historical Journal* 48, no. 2 (June 2005): 391-414. However, Peltonen's contention that Whigs such as Thomas Gordon and Bernard Mandeville denied the link between commerce and politeness does not detract from the existence and influence of the transformative code of manners and commerce propounded by Shaftesbury, Defoe, Addison and Steele.

Christian virtue.[91] True friendship, conversation and mutual confidence are seen to arise from the culture of modern urban life, rather than from the patriarchal structures on which High Church theology is based; thus 'the Town' is exalted for its role in releasing man's capacity for benevolence and fostering his sense of public and Christian duty.[92]

The ideological thrust of politeness and its modern, secular notion of virtue engage with a number of opponents. The cultivation of modern manners and taste is set against the 'uncouth', 'outmoded' values of classical models exalted by republican, neo-Harringtonian critics of the regime.[93] The 'polite' ideal of a refined and congenial gentleman is a counter to the continuing association of Whiggism with Puritan enthusiasm. 'Politeness', as we have seen, posits modern urban life as a secular source of Christian virtue beyond the patriarchal framework claimed by High Anglicans. As Nicholas Phillipson describes the philosophy of 'politeness': '[d]efending revolution principles […] was now becoming a matter of restructuring the very foundations of English political, moral and religious culture'.[94]

Early Whig ideology, then, comprises a varied and evolving set of political principles; radiating from the dominant Whig positions at any particular point is a range of divergent attitudes and commitments, which still recognizably constitute the wider spectrum of early Whig politics. The appellation 'Whig' accommodates personages as strikingly different as John Trenchard, the republican Whig who vigorously opposed William's standing armies in 1697-9, and Charles Montagu, the Junto lord and architect of William's financial revolution, which funded the wars on the continent; the Whig moralist, Joseph Addison, who promoted virtue and politeness in commercial and social relations, and Bernard Mandeville, whose *The Fable of the Bees* (1714) argues that self-interest and the indulgence of appetites are the important fuels of a capitalist economy. This begs a number of questions pertinent to my thesis. Should we understand Whiggism as a distinct political

[91] Nicholas Phillipson, 'Politics and politeness in the reigns of Anne and the early Hanoverians,' in *The Varieties of British Political Thought, 1500-1800*, eds. J.G.A. Pocock, Gordon J. Schochet and Lois G. Schwoerer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 226.
[92] Ibid., 227.
[93] Pocock, *Virtue,* 236.
[94] Philipson, 'politeness', 225.

and cultural category? Are there common political commitments, attitudes and prejudices that can provide a set of coherent values by which to define Whig ideology? Or is Whig political culture just an opportunistic set of allegiances which shifts according to immediate historical conditions, and the priorities and circumstances of the party and individuals? Does Whig literary culture map straightforwardly onto Whig political culture – and what does this mean for Whig women writers who are barred from holding official political posts and do not operate within the dominant networks of Whig culture, such as the Kit-Cat Club? How can we usefully define what it means to be a Whiggish woman writer – and what kind of evidence can we discern of women's political identity from their writings?

This thesis understands Whiggism as a combination of divergent attitudes and commitments, but nonetheless engages with what I identify as the distinct themes and emphases of Whig ideology. My reading assumes a set of core Whig values, which demonstrates a broad commitment to the Revolution Settlement of 1689, and the Revolution Principles upon which this was based. Early Whig politics affirm a common allegiance to the main tenets of the Revolution: a constitutional monarchy, the legal sovereignty of parliament, a Protestant succession, and religious toleration within the Protestant community. Yet we need to be careful about what these positions actually mean. Support for a constitutional polity, for example, does not necessarily equate to a wholesale rejection of the rhetoric of divine monarchy. As my reading of a range of Whig panegyrics demonstrates, Whig propagandists celebrated the Revolution and the accession of the Hanoverians as acts of divine providence, in order to burnish the authority of a new ruler or dynasty.

My study also seeks to recover the political valence of women's writing through recognizing the ways in which Whiggish affiliations might be signalled by the social networks that the three women participated in. The link between group identity and political identity is far from straightforward; as discussed, there were a number of examples of cross-party friendships in the period.[95] Yet attention to women's neglected connections to the politicized literary circles of the time illuminates the ways in which a shared community of ideological interests and objectives informs

[95] See p.4, n13.

their public writings. The networks and alliances of Whig literary culture, however, function differently for women writers who are excluded from the homosocial groupings to which their male counterparts belonged. This study considers women's socio-political networks through the circulation of letters, dedications of plays and commendatory poems. I also focus on the role of the predominantly Whiggish post-Revolution theatre as a collaborative milieu in which dramatists, stage managers, patrons and actors are involved, functioning as an important site of Whig cultural production that included the participation of women.

The critical lenses applied in this study adopt two important frameworks. Alert to the constantly shifting nature of party political conflict, my reading adopts a tight historical focus. The texts considered in this thesis are analysed in relation to the immediate historical and political contexts within which they were produced, with close attention to the important partisan debates of the moment, and the issues, events or public figures which form the focus of that debate. While the primary focus is on writings produced during the reign of Anne through to the early Hanoverian era, and I am necessarily alert to the political and historical specifities of the time, I am also attentive to the broader impulses of Whig ideology from the Revolution of 1688, which impacted Whig culture through to the early decades of the eighteenth century. This includes the drive for moral reformation which forms an important component of the ideological underpinnings of William and Mary's assumption and consolidation of power. It also includes the equally crucial mode of Whiggish socio-political reform in the reign of Anne: the culture of 'politeness' and virtuous sociability, which emerged as an ideological defence of Whig commercial virtues.

## Chapters

This study is divided into two broad sections comprising the genres of drama and poetry. This structure reflects my concerns to recover women writers' contributions to the shaping of Whig literary culture through generic conventions and institutions. Chapter 1 establishes the framework for 'early Whig drama' from two perspectives: I explore the largely Whiggish features of the post-Revolution theatre, in terms of its playwrights, patrons and dramatic output, and trace the Whiggish impulse for

moral reformation and its resultant impact on the contemporary stage. A key concern is to foreground the ways in which the Whig-dominated theatrical industry provided women writers with a valuable network of contacts and alliances that support their literary endeavours. I also illustrate the ways in which women writers capitalized on the moral imperative for reform, legitimizing their authorial endeavours by fashioning themselves as advocates of Whig virtue.

Chapter 2 examines Trotter's rendering of Whig heroic virtue in *The Revolution of Sweden*, within a context rarely employed for women's drama: the war on the continent. Through comparisons with contemporary military heroic plays by Nicholas Rowe and John Dennis, I demonstrate the ways in which Trotter reconfigures Whig conceptions of heroic virtue into a feminised brand of public virtue, as embodied by her drama's courageous, civic-minded female patriots. Chapter 3 emphasizes another dimension to female conceptions of Whig virtue: Centlivre's feminised configuration of commercial virtue in her gaming plays: *The Gamester* (1705) and *The Basset Table* (1705). Centlivre's gaming comedies are the dramatic equivalent of 'capital satires', highly engaged with underlying anxieties about credit and speculation in a period of radical socio-economic change. My reading foregrounds Centlivre's interest in the culture of 'politeness', exploring her neglected contributions to the defence and recuperation of the values of a nascent credit economy through a transformative code of morality that mitigates the corrupting influence of money and speculation.

Part 2 considers women's contributions to the evolution of Whig poetics by focusing on political poems by Egerton, Trotter and Centlivre, which engage with partisan national issues: the continental war, the conclusion of peace and the Protestant Hanoverian succession. Chapter 4 examines Egerton's neglected political poetry alongside her better-known proto-feminist works, to locate hitherto unexplored connections between her partisan commitments and feminist aims. I demonstrate how Egerton imbues her feminist verse with the same militant energies and the Whig themes of liberty and deliverance found in her Whiggish public poems, to reveal party political aspects of her feminism which have yet to be recognized. Chapter 5 explores women writers' engagement with the towering figure of the continental war: the Duke of Marlborough. Through comparisons with the partisan panegyrics by Joseph Addison and John Philips, I demonstrate the

Whiggish themes and emphases of Trotter's poetics tributes to Marlborough. My reading identifies a key shift in the evolution of Whig poetics: the transformation of the violent military templates of Williamite poetry to a more virtuous, humane and 'polite' configuration of heroism in the reign of Anne. My critique of Egerton's unpublished manuscript verse address to Marlborough focuses on her concerns with Whig notions of liberty, both political and aesthetic. I demonstrate Egerton's striking intervention in the Whig poetic mode of the heroic sublime, and the ways in which she refashions problematic tropes of literary authority, and the androcentric themes of heroic verse to claim artistic freedom as a woman writer.

The final chapter focuses on Centlivre's political poetry, which engages with the crucial partisan concerns that dominated the final years of Anne's reign: the conclusion of the 'Tory Peace' in the Treaty of Utrecht of 1713, and the Protestant Hanoverian succession. My reading locates an intriguing Tory–Whig exchange between Centlivre's poem on the peace and Pope's *Windsor-Forest* (1713), published a year later – highly suggestive of the ongoing partisan battle for the ownership of appropriate models and forms, which distinguish the development of political verse. This study concludes with an account of Centlivre's panegyrics to the early Hanoverian dynasty, read alongside a substantial body of Whig laudatory verse produced during the Hanoverian accession of 1714. The focus on the neglected succession literature of George I's reign sheds revealing light on the continuing evolution of Whig poetics, which includes a far from monolithic development of a Whig literary aesthetic – a discrepancy which became a matter of contention within Whig circles. Poems of the Hanoverian accession also convey Britain's evolving sense of national identity, providing new perspectives on the emergent themes of peace, trade and empire.

# 1

## Women writers and the post-Revolution Whig theatre

> he was seen very gravely with his Hat over his Eyes among his chief Actors, and Actresses, together with the two She Things, call'd *Poetesses*, which Write for his House, […] thus seated in State among those and some other, of his Ingenious critical Friends, they fell all together upon a full cry of Damnation, […] this very generous, obliging Mr. *Congreve* was heard to say, *We'll find out a New Way for this Spark, take my word there is a way of clapping of a Play down*.[1]

This contemporary account refers to a curious incident at London's Drury Lane theatre in September 1697. The playwright William Congreve was attending a production of George Powell's *The Imposture Defeated* (1697). Sitting with a company of friends and theatrical colleagues including two '*Poetesses*' – a probable reference to Congreve's protégées and fellow dramatists, Mary Pix and Catharine Trotter – Congreve led a rowdy effort to barrack the actors and disrupt the performance of Powell's play.[2] The backstory to this incident was a tale of rivalry and deceit; some months earlier, Pix had submitted a manuscript of her *The Deceiver Deceived* (1698) to Powell at Drury Lane, who rejected it and instead brazenly plagiarized the play to produce his own version, *The Imposture Defeated*. The controversy developed into a public feud between the two patent theatrical companies, Christopher Rich's company at Drury Lane, and Thomas Betterton's Actor's Company at Lincoln's Inn Fields, with which Congreve was closely associated.

The incident is suggestive of a number of issues that concern female authorship. Firstly, female playwrights faced risks and controversy when submitting their works for production in the contemporary stage. The demeaning references to Pix and Trotter as 'She Things' also reflect the misogyny that women faced as public writers, as we have witnessed in the satiric play, *The Female Wits*. Yet the public show of solidarity for Pix demonstrated by Congreve and his circle, which included 'Actors, and Actresses' and his literary friends, also indicates that women writers received loyalty and support from the theatrical network to which they belonged. The vision of Pix and Trotter

[1] *Animadversions on Mr Congreve's Late Answer to Mr Collier* [etc] (London, 1698), 34-35.
[2] For the identification of Pix and Trotter in this account, see Kelley, *Trotter*, 17.

sitting alongside Congreve and their theatrical colleagues to disrupt a rival performance at Drury Lane underscores that female playwrights were active participants in the close-knit contemporary theatrical scene. At the time, Congreve was the toast of the London stage; his debut play, *The Old Batchelor* opened to great acclaim in March 1693, followed by the successful *The Double Dealer* (1693) and *Love for Love* (1695); the premier of the latter was the occasion for the opening of the new Lincoln's Inn Field theatre in April 1695. Congreve was clearly a positive advocate for female playwrights. After his intervention at the performance of Powell's play, Congreve provided further support to Pix when he contributed a prologue to her *The Deceiver Deceived*, in which he publicly attacks Powell: 'Our Authoress, like true Women, shew'd her Play/ To Some, who, like true Wits, stole't half away'.[3] Congreve was also a friend of and literary mentor to Trotter, an issue I explore further in my reading of Trotter's drama.

This chapter explores the links between women writers and the post-Revolution stage, focusing on the ways in which the contemporary theatrical network was a source of vital support for female authors. My reading investigates the ways in which the post-Revolution theatre provided women writers with a supportive network of colleagues, friends and patrons, which helped underpin and enable their literary endeavours. I also examine the political valence of the contemporary stage to reveal an important yet neglected aspect of literary Whiggism: the Whiggish features of the theatrical industry in terms of its playwrights, patrons, and stage managers. The post-Revolution theatre was a significant centre of Whig cultural production – populated by a predominantly Whiggish group of theatrical players and patronized by Whig statesmen and the Kit-Cat Club – whose political import has not received adequate critical attention. The contemporary stage provided a critical source of support for female playwrights who formed an active and integral part of the theatrical industry. Through close investigations of the vital interactions between the largely Whiggish dramatic players, I demonstrate the ways in which women writers capitalized on the theatrical network as a platform to forge useful connections within Whig literary and political circles, and obtain material and professional support for the production of their works. I also consider the wider socio-political

[3] William Congreve, prologue to *The Deceiver Deceived*, by Mary Pix (London, 1698).

currents that impacted female authorship of the period: the drive for moral reformation which buffeted the post-Revolution stage. Through close readings of little-known poems and correspondence, I explore women writers' strategic self-fashioning in response to the moralist impulse for reform.

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While the Royalist-Stuart ideological underpinnings of the Restoration stage have long been established, the Whiggish political tenor of the post-Revolution theatre which followed it has received little critical attention. Studies on eighteenth-century literary Whiggism have neglected this important aspect of Whig cultural production in their dominant focus on Whig poetics.[4] Womersley's comprehensive collection of essays on Whig literary culture encompasses a variety of genres including poetry, prose and periodicals but excludes drama.[5] Susan Owen's political reading of seventeenth-century drama deftly explores Whig plays' 'vitality in opposition' but limits its focus to an earlier period of the Exclusion Crisis of 1678-83.[6] A notable exception is John Loftis' still valuable critique of 1964 – which explores the political valence of eighteenth-century drama – to which my reading is indebted.[7] More recently, Aparna Gollapudi's study of eighteenth-century 'reform comedy' links the popular reform plot with 'the emergence of a socio-political formation based on the consolidation and solidification of pro-government, Whiggish, middling class power'.[8] As Gollapudi rightly asserts, the post-Collierite drive for moral reformation of drama was part of a wider reforming impulse definitively shaped by the 1688 Revolution in which William and Mary were fashioned as moral saviours of a rapidly decaying nation.[9] My reading refines Gollapudi's thesis, adopting a more detailed focus on the theatrical and political players of the day, and the networks and links that underpin the post-Revolution stage. I shift the focus of attention to women dramatists, and in the next two chapters, expand Gollapudi's exclusive focus on reform comedy to encompass both

[4] See Womersley, *Augustan*; Gerrard, *Patriot Opposition*; Williams, *Literary Culture*.
[5] Womersley, *"Cultures of Whiggism".*
[6] Susan J. Owen, *Restoration Drama and Crisis* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996).
[7] Loftis, *Politics.*
[8] Aparna Gollapudi, *Moral Reform in Comedy and Culture, 1696-1747* (Surrey; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 8.
[9] Ibid., 7.

tragedy and comedy. In this chapter, I focus on a significant socio-political aspect of contemporary theatre which has not been covered in Gollapudi's critique – the material and ideological basis of the literary and patronage networks of the Whiggish stage – in order to demonstrate its supportive potential for women writers.

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Captured in Addison's famous assertion that 'The *British* Theatre was *Whig* even in the worst of Times', the post-Revolution stage was very much a Whiggish enterprise, dominated by playwrights of Whiggish affiliations.[10] The new generation of dramatists who came of age in the 1690s onwards largely comprised Whig sympathizers: William Congreve, Nicholas Rowe, George Farquhar, Colley Cibber, John Vanbrugh, Joseph Addison, Richard Steele, John Dennis, as well as Susanna Centlivre, Catharine Trotter and Mary Pix. Of Restoration playwrights of a previous generation who still produced drama for the post-Revolution stage, Thomas Shadwell (William and Mary's poet laureate) and Thomas D'Urfey were also Whigs, the latter opportunistically shifting his allegiances after 1688. This is not to say that there were no Tory playwrights at the time, or that Tory or even Jacobite plays were never performed on the post-Revolution stage.[11] The Royalist Dryden, who lost his poet laureateship in 1688 due to his political loyalties, returned to playwriting in 1689 (ironically to compensate for the loss of income from the withdrawal of his laureateship), and produced five dramas between 1689 and 1694. As we have seen, Delarivier Manley was a Tory loyalist and she produced four plays between 1696 and 1717.[12] Yet it is undeniable that the post-Revolution stage was dominated by Whiggish dramatists, underpinned no doubt by the change in regime and the generosity of Whig patronage of the theatre. A number of stage managers and patent holders were also Whiggish personages.[13] Vanbrugh and Congreve were appointed joint-

[10] Joseph Addison, *Freeholder* 34 (April 16, 1716) in *The Freeholder*, ed. James Leheny (Oxford: Clarendon; New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 191.
[11] Loftis asserts that the sole Jacobite drama performed in the period was Beville Higgons' *The Generous Conqueror* (1701); Loftis, *Politics*, 30-31.
[12] Herman considers *Almyna* (1707) as Manley's first explicitly political or 'Tory' play; see Ruth Herman, *The Business of a Woman: The Political Writings of Delarivier Manley* (London: Associated University Press, 2003), 12.
[13] For the management of the two patent theatres during the post-Revolution period, see Loftis, *Politics*, 47-50.

managers of the new Queen's theatre in Haymarket in 1705.[14] The Whig playwright and actor, Colley Cibber, dominated the Royal Theatre at Drury Lane as its co-stage manager and co-patentee for more than two decades from 1710 to 1733.[15] Richard Steele joined Cibber as co-patentee of Drury Lane in 1714, and from 1715 served as the theatre's governor under a life-patent granted by George I.[16]

The predominance of Whiggish dramatists was underpinned by Whig patronage of the theatre, which is apparent in the dedications of plays to prominent Whig statesmen. As Loftis contends, the association of drama with the Whigs in this period is in part due to the patronage of Whig politicians:

> Judging from the dedication of plays, the lords of the Junto, especially Halifax, seem to have been liberal benefactors of the dramatists. Congreve, Gildon, Thomas Baker, and Rowe dedicated plays to Halifax; D'Urfey one to Wharton; and Mrs Centlivre one to Somers […] There was no comparable display towards the Tory leaders.[17]

The patrons highlighted by Loftis – Charles Montagu, the Earl of Halifax; Thomas Wharton, the Marquis of Wharton; and John Somers, Baron Somers – were all Whig lords of the Junto and members of the Kit-Cat Club. Somers was William's Lord Chancellor in 1697 and went on to lead the Junto Whigs in the early years of Anne's reign. Wharton supported the invitation to William in 1688 and later became a Commissioner for the Treaty of Union 1706 and Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, appointing Joseph Addison as his secretary. Montagu, William's Chancellor of the Exchequer and First Lord of the Treasury, was an accomplished poet himself. Hailed as 'the greatest Maecenas', Montagu was probably the greatest patron of the arts of the period.[18] John Dennis highlights that Montagu was the recipient of more dedications 'than any Man of his Time',[19] and Samuel Johnson

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[14] See William Congreve, *Letters & Documents,* ed. John C. Hodges (London: Macmillan, 1964), 110-1. Congreve resigned his position in December 1705.

[15] See Eric Salmon, 'Cibber, Colley (1671–1757),' in *ODNB* (Oxford University Press, 2004), accessed January 20, 2018, https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:4563/10.1093/ref:odnb/5416.

[16] Edward A. Bloom and Lillian D. Bloom, introduction to *Joseph Addison and Richard Steele: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1995), 9.

[17] Loftis, *Politics*, 40.

[18] Preface to *The Works and Life of the Right Honourable Charles, Late Earl of Halifax* (London, 1715).

[19] John Dennis, dedication of *Remarks on a Play, call'd, the Conscious Lovers* (London, 1723). For Montagu's role as a patron, see 'Memoirs of the Life of Charles Montague [*sic*], Late Earl of Halifax,' in Montagu, *Works and Life*; see also Williams, *Literary Culture*, 218-9.

later described the statesman as 'the general patron' who doled out largesse to 'almost all' the poets of the day.[20] In her reading of Whig patronage networks, Williams demonstrates the role of Whig grandees as sponsors and guardians of a nascent Whig poetic culture.[21] As she contends: '[t]he Whig ideological commitment to a unity of politics and letters was […] institutionalized through networks of patronage which linked poets and statesmen at the highest level'.[22] Williams provides a roster of Whig patrons and poets linked by a symbiotic relationship whereby poetic endeavours were rewarded through the form of sinecures, official placements and financial support. Yet a detailed look at the dedication of plays of the post-Revolution era reveals that many of the leading patrons of Whig poetry identified by Williams were also generous supporters of the stage – highly suggestive of the important role of the theatre as a parallel centre of Whig cultural endeavour. A number of the writers who thrived on the Whiggish patronage network were not just poets but dramatists too (Addison, Steele, Dennis). Two well-known recipients of Whig political largesse, William Congreve and Nicholas Rowe, were primarily known for their drama rather than their poetry. Congreve, the celebrated playwright, was patronized by Montagu who granted him lucrative government appointments presumably for Congreve's contribution to the stage.[23] Rowe, one of the period's pre-eminent dramatists and author of *Tamerlane* (1701), the voraciously Williamite drama which virtually became a Whig party play, was rewarded with government posts and appointed Poet Laureate at the accession of George I (Cibber too was granted the Poet Laureateship in 1730, thanks to his contribution to the Whig cause as a playwright and stage manager).[24] The prominent Whig patrons of both poetry and drama of the time include Montagu, Wharton, Somers, and Charles Sackville, the Earl of Dorset, who was the dedicatee of a number of plays including Congreve's *Love for Love*, and

[20] Samuel Johnson, *Lives of the English Poets,* ed. G. B. Hill (Oxford: Clarendon, 1905), 2:47.
[21] Williams, *Literary Culture*, 204-40.
[22] Ibid., 217.
[23] Congreve was appointed commissioner for licensing hackney coaches (1695-1705), commissioner for wine licenses (1705-14), and Secretary for Jamaica in 1714. See, C.Y. Ferdinand and D.F. McKenzie, 'Congreve, William (1670-1729),' in *ODNB* (Oxford University Press, 2004), accessed January 25, 2018, https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:4563/10.1093/ref:odnb/6069.
[24] Rowe assumed the role of under-secretary to the Secretary of State for Scotland in 1709, and after the accession of George I, was appointed a surveyor of customs at the Port of London and a clerk on the Prince of Wales council. See Stephen Bernard and Michael Caines, general introduction to *The Plays and Poems of Nicholas Rowe*, ed. Stephen Bernard, vol. 1, *The Early Plays*, eds. Rebecca Bullard and John McTague (London; New York: Routledge, 2017), 7.

Trotter's *Agnes de Castro*. Dorset, the elder statesman of Whig politics and one of the 'immortal seven' who signed the invitation to William and Mary, was also Lord Chamberlain of the Royal Household from 1689 to 1697 – the ultimate authority responsible for the supervision of the theatre. A generous benefactor of the arts, the statesman was famously a patron of Dryden and the young Charles Montagu and Matthew Prior.[25] Dorset also played a significant yet rarely acknowledged role during the actors' revolt of 1695, in which the theatrical monopoly of the United Company of Drury Lane was broken by Thomas Betterton and his company of actors who decamped into a new rival theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields. The revolt was effected with the help of Dorset and Sir Robert Howard, the old Whig playwright and official, who secured Betterton an audience with William; the King subsequently granted Betterton and the actors' a royal licence to operate a new competing theatre.[26] Thus from the outset, the Whig establishment (and William) appeared to recognize and support the important role of the contemporary stage.

In the reign of Anne, the most visible form of Whig patronage of the stage was provided by the Kit-Cat Club, the Whiggish 'union of politics and wit', which aimed at promoting and sponsoring the Whigs' ideological and cultural objectives.[27] The Kit-Cat Club numbered amongst its members: lords of the Junto; the war leaders, the Duke of Marlborough and Lord Godolphin; and a number of Whiggish writers, including Arthur Maynwaring, Samuel Garth, Vanbrugh, Congreve, Addison, and Steele.[28] The Kit-Cats' interest in the theatre has already been suggested by their posthumous attempt to appropriate the memory of Dryden, who was not only an eminent poet, critic and translator, but probably the greatest dramatist of his age.[29] The Kit-Cat Club's most public contribution to the contemporary stage was their sponsorship of an opulent new theatre, the Queen's Theatre at Haymarket in 1705. Aimed at assisting Betterton's company, who were constrained by the limitations of their premises at Lincoln's Inn Fields, the theatre was funded by a subscription list

[25] For Dorset's career as a literary patron, see Brice Harris, *Charles Sackville, Sixth Earl of Dorset: Patron and Poet of the Restoration* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1940), 173-214.
[26] See Loftis, *Politics*, 26-27.
[27] Ibid., 40.
[28] For a book-length study of the Kit-Cat Club, see Field, *Kit-Cat.*
[29] For the Kit-Cats' influence on the theatre, see Robert J. Allen, 'The Kit-Cat Club and the Theatre,' *Review of English Studies* 7, no. 25 (Jan 1931): 56-61; and Field, *Kit-Cat,* chaps. 5, 9-10.

comprising members of the Kit-Cat Club and raised by Vanbrugh, who also undertook the design of the building project. As Cibber reports:

> a new Project was form'd of building them a stately Theatre, in the *Hay-Market*, by Sir John Vanbrugh, for which he rais'd a Subscription of thirty Persons of Quality, at one hundred Pounds each, in Consideration whereof every Subscriber, for his own Life was to be admitted to whatever Entertainments should be publickly perform'd there, without farther Payment for his Entrance.[30]

A waspish comment by the Tory Charles Leslie describes the new Whiggish theatre as 'a *Temple* for their *Dagon*, the new *Play-House* in the *Hay-Market*'; as Leslie observes: the foundation stone of the building is inscribed *'Kit Cat'* on one side and '*Little Whig'* on the other.[31] The partisan nature of playgoing is depicted in contemporary reports that the Kit-Cats attended performances in a group and that a special section of the theatre was reserved for them.[32] The Kit-Cats' generous patronage of the stage is reflected in the compliments of contemporary dramatists, for example, Thomas D'Urfey's effusive tribute to 'the Right Noble, Honourable and Ingenious Patrons of *Poetry, Musick, &c.,* The *Celebrated Society* of the *Kit-Cat-Club*'.[33]

The emphasis on and resources provided to the stage by the Kit-Cat Club indicate the significance of the theatre as an important component of the Whigs' cultural and political programme. Just as Whig patronage of poetry underpinned the development of a Whig poetic culture, Whig sponsorship of the theatre was aimed at imprinting Whig cultural authority and supporting a Whiggish literary-political agenda in the realm of drama. Coupled with the Whig sympathies of the majority of playwrights and stage managers, this resulted in the dramatic espousal of Whig ideology registered in a number of stage productions. Post-Revolution Whig drama often re-enacted the principles of the Revolution – the espousal of political liberty and a contractarian polity, and the indictment of tyranny and absolutism – particularly at politically pivotal times. Congreve's *The Mourning Bride*, produced in 1697, the year after the Assassination Plot on William III, helped consolidate rising public support for the King in its reconstruction of 'the Whig myth of the Revolution

[30] Colley Cibber, *An Apology for the Life of Mr Colley Cibber,* ed. Robert W. Lowe (London, 1889), 2:319-20.
[31] Charles Leslie, *Rehearsal* 41 (May 5-12, 1705).
[32] See Allen, 'Kit-Cat Club,' 58.
[33] Thomas D'Urfey, dedication of *Wonders in the Sun* [etc] (London, 1706).

at the same time that like-minded apologists were revising history to justify the Williamite succession'.[34] The Junto's close links to the theatre meant that a number of dramatists adopted the position of Court Whigs. In the wake of the military demobilization enforced by the Tory-Country parliamentary opposition to the standing army in 1697-99, Whig plays protested against the nation's perceived ingratitude to the soldiery, as did George Farquhar's *Love and a Bottle* (1698) and *The Constant Couple* (1699), and William Burnaby's *The Reformed Wife* (1700).[35] The onset of the War of the Spanish Succession also produced highly patriotic and militant plays designed to rouse public fervour for military action, as in the classic exposition of Whig political principles and paean to William, the warrior-king: Rowe's *Tamerlane*. The jingoistic aims of Whig military drama are explicitly outlined by Dennis, who explains the 'just Intentions' of his *Liberty Asserted* (1704): 'to open the Eyes of deluded Men, to inspire them with the Love of Liberty, and unite and animate them against the Common Foe of *Europe*'.[36] The conflict with France brought forth a war-inspired Francophobia witnessed in both Whig tragedies and comedies. Set in far-flung Canada, Dennis' *Liberty Asserted* dramatizes a conflict between French and English colonial powers to draw a stark contrast between 'English liberty' and 'French tyranny'. Steele's comedy, *The Tender Husband* (1705), performed eight months after Marlborough's victory at Blenheim, features a thrifty reformer husband who reclaims his wife, Mrs Clerimont, from Francophile folly: the vices of vanity, extravagance, and gambling which she picked up on a tour to France.[37]

However, this does not mean that the Tories did not hold any sway over dramatic production. The theatre, of course, was a commercial enterprise, subject to audience demands and taste. Cibber's contemporary account suggests that the professional and middling-classes dominated the composition of the audience: '[t]he City, the Inns of Court, and the middle Part of Town, which were

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[34] Richard Lewis Braverman, *Plots and Counterplots: Sexual Politics and the Body Politic in English Literature, 1660-1730* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 201.

[35] See Loftis, *Politics*, 28; and Kevin J. Gardner, 'Theatrum Belli: Late-Restoration Comedy and the Rise of the Standing Army,' *Theatre Survey* 36, no. 1 (1995): 37-54.

[36] John Dennis, dedication of *Liberty Asserted* (London, 1704).

[37] See Aparna Gollapudi, 'Jokes and Party Strokes: Whig Ideology and Wife Reform in Steele's *The Tender Husband* and Johnson's *The Masquerade*,' *Modern Philology* 108, no. 3 (February 2011): 406.

the most constant Support of a Theatre'.[38] To some extent, the social composition of theatregoers post-1688 was more bourgeois and 'Whiggish' than the coterie audience of the Stuart courts.[39] But Tory loyalists too patronized the theatre and there are a number of contemporary accounts of rival Whig and Tory elements of the audience, including Addison's famous depiction of Whig and Tory patches worn by partisan female theatregoers.[40] Given that the stage was under the regulation of the government (through the Lord Chamberlain and under him, the Master of the Revels), the political valence of dramatic productions was also influenced by the government in power. In 1710, Anne replaced the Junto ally, the Marquis of Kent, with the Tory-inclined Duke of Shrewsbury as Lord Chamberlain. Soon after, the Tories gained their resounding election victory of 1710, following which the Tory leaders, Robert Harley (later Earl of Oxford) and Henry St John (later Viscount Bolingbroke), exerted strict control over political opinion in drama.[41] As Loftis points out, during the Tory ascendancy of 1710 and 1714, the political content of drama, if any, tended to be Tory.[42] Thus the fiercely Whiggish *Tamerlane* disappeared from the London stage between 1710 and 1714, before returning after the accession of George I as a regular and frequent production, including to commemorate the anniversary of William's landing at Torbay of 1688.[43] Addison obtained Pope's help to submit a manuscript of *Cato* (1713) to St John before it was performed; unsurprisingly given the Tory inclinations of the governing regime, Addison was careful to ensure that the play contained an ambiguous political message.[44] We return to Addison's contention that 'The *British* Theatre was *Whig* even in the worst of Times'. Writing in 1716, after the Hanoverian accession had consolidated power under a Whig government and looking back on a period of Tory ascendancy of 1710-14, Addison was asserting the fundamentally Whiggish character of the post-Revolution stage. Even at a time when its political opponents were controlling the machinery of state, Addison points out, the

[38] Cibber, *Apology*, 1:322.
[39] See David Roberts, *The Ladies: Female Patronage of Restoration Drama 1660-1700* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), 128.
[40] Joseph Addison, *Spectator* 81 (June 2, 1711) in *The Spectator*, ed. Donald F. Bond (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965), 1:346-9.
[41] A contemporary newspaper describes how Henry St John 'survey'd all the Plays before they were acted'; *Daily Gazeteer*, June 13, 1737.
[42] Loftis, *Politics*, 50.
[43] Ibid., 34.
[44] Ibid., 57-60.

Whiggish theatre of 'the last Reign did not scruple to testify its Zeal for the Good of our Country'.[45]

**Whig drama and the moral reformation of the theatre**

Whilst the change in regime of 1688 produced Whig hegemony in the theatre, the contemporary stage was also impacted by an important socio-political impulse which was closely linked to the Glorious Revolution: the drive for moral reformation of the theatre. In 1698, the clergyman, Jeremy Collier, published his infamous anti-theatrical tract which captured and articulated the drive towards moral reformation of the stage.[46] Contending that '[t]he business of *Plays* is to recommend Vertue and discountenance Vice', Collier condemns leading contemporary playwrights including Wycherley, Dryden, Congreve and Vanbrugh for undermining public morality by a sympathetic presentation of vice: '[t]he stage-poets make their principal persons vicious and reward them at the end of the play'.[47] Collier's attack was part of a post-Revolution turn towards morality and religion in general; the stage, with its long-held associations with immorality and licentiousness, became a particular target for reformists in their drive for a reformation of manners.

As has been established by Dudley Bahlman and Tony Claydon, the impulse for moral reformation was borne out of the political imperatives of the Revolution and William and Mary's assertion of authority following their unconventional assumption of the throne.[48] In a letter published soon after his accession to the throne, William explicitly declares his commitment to a nation-wide reformation of manners:

> We most earnestly desire and shall endeavour a general reformation of manners of all our subjects as being that which must establish our throne and secure to our people their religion, happiness and peace, all of which seems to be in great danger at this time by reason of that overflowing vice which is too notorious in this as well as other neighbouring nations.[49]

This call for reform conflates the moral and the political, incorporating many of the Revolutionary

[45] Joseph Addison, *Freeholder* 34 (April 16, 1716) in *Freeholder*, 191.
[46] Jeremy Collier, *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* [etc] (London, 1698). Subsequent citations are to this edition. For a book-length treatment of the Collier controversy, see Sister Rose Anthony, *The Jeremy Collier Stage Controversy, 1698-1726* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1937).
[47] Collier, *Short View*, 1-2.
[48] Bahlman, *Moral Revolution*; Claydon, *Godly Revolution*.
[49] *His Majesties Letter to the Lord Bishop of London* [etc] (London, 1689), 4.

concerns and propaganda underpinning the Williamite regime's assertion of authority. The King seeks to 'establish' and 'secure', in other words to consolidate and entrench his authority following the Revolution of 1688. The terminology of this letter manipulates the basis upon which the King's invasion of Britain was premised: William's declared concerns for the wellbeing of the nation simultaneously legitimizes his assumption of power in his guise as a Protestant saviour who seeks to 'secure to our people their religion', and deliver them from the 'great danger […] of that overflowing vice' that threatens their 'happiness and peace'. William's accession to the throne, which was tantamount to an invasion by a foreign power, was configured by Whig propagandists as a 'rescue' of the nation, with the King in the role of a divinely ordained saviour who liberates Britain from the tyranny of Stuart rule.[50] The 'overflowing vice' referred to in William's letter clearly alludes to Whig conceptions of the corruption and moral laxity associated with Stuart rule, while the 'danger' posed by 'neighbouring nations' points to the threat of Catholic, absolutist France, which conveniently for Whig propagandists provided safe haven to James II in the years following the Revolution (the subsequent war with France underscores the threat of this 'enemy state').

The dependence of political stability on moral reform was established through Whig exploitation of anti-Catholic sentiment articulated in moral terms, whereby Stuart vice and corruption were set against the moral integrity of 'true' Protestants. As Bahlman argues, Whig discourse successfully conceived their political enemies as Popish vessels of wickedness and tyranny, discrediting them with the same damaging associations; thus James II, Jacobites, Catholics, Rome and France represent 'Stuart vice, Jacobite vice, Popish vice, French vice'.[51] Daniel Defoe, for example, condemns these 'enemies of the state' as 'the very dregs and scum of that debauchery which super-abounded in those lands where they had fled during the Interregnum'.[52] At the same time, William's 'deliverance' of the kingdom from Popish tyranny was represented as a providential blessing in numerous royal proclamations and propagandist tracts; thus reform is crucial because continued divine favour necessitated widespread moral reform to rid the country of corruption and

[50] See Williams, *Literary Culture*, 93-134.
[51] Bahlman, *Moral Revolution,* 8.
[52] Daniel Defoe, *The Christianity of the High-Church Consider'd* (London, 1704), 9.

immorality.[53] As succinctly expressed in William's letter, only through purging the nation of 'the great danger […] of that overflowing vice' can the populace's 'happiness and peace' and 'true' religion be preserved.

William's call for a reformation of manners was underscored and widely disseminated through letters, orders and proclamations issued by both William and Mary on the urgent necessity of reforms, a practice which Anne continued during her reign.[54] Mary played a particular role as a champion of reform through her famous letter to the justices of Middlesex urging them to zealously prosecute offenders of moral law; her act took on a providential quality when days after the letter was composed in July 1691, the Jacobite forces of James II suffered a crushing defeat in Ireland.[55] Thus the 'reforming impulse […] crucial to the temper of the age' is closely connected to the assertion of Whig authority in the Revolution and the fashioning of William and Mary as divinely ordained agents of moral reform and religious renewal.[56]

William's reformist zeal helped ignite a nation-wide drive for moral reform in the years following 1689, during which the stage became a major target for reformists thanks to its long-held connotations of immorality and vice.[57] The theatre was a focal point and whipping boy for the perceived moral decay of the nation: as a contemporary commentator complained, the vice and corruption of the age 'hath been much increased by the licentiousness of the stage where the worst examples have been placed in the best lights and recommended to imitation'.[58] While attacks on the theatre have long-standing antecedents, this period witnessed an intense and broad-based assault that originated from clergymen, audiences and commentators of different political persuasions. The Whig writer, Richard Blackmore, condemns contemporary playwrights for seeking 'to [r]uin the end

[53] Claydon, *Godly Revolution*, 51-52
[54] Bahlman, *Moral Revolution*, 8.
[55] For abstracts from this letter, see *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic series. Of the Reign of William and Mary* (London, 1898), 2:437-8.
[56] Gollapudi, *Moral Reform*, 5.
[57] Bahlman explains how the national enthusiasm for reform encompassed not only clergymen, justices and parliamentarians but large numbers of the country's civic-minded laymen; Bahlman, *Moral Revolution*, 14.
[58] 'A Representation of the Present State of Religion,' in *The Harleian Miscellany* [etc] (London, 1810), 11:165.

of their own Art […] and bring *Vice* and *Corruption of Manners* into Esteem and Reputation'.[59] John Tillotson, Archbishop of Canterbury, fiercely denounces contemporary drama as 'intolerable, and not fit to be permitted in a *civilized*, much less in a *Christian* Nation', linking his pronouncements directly to the Williamite drive to reform: 'in compliance with their Majesties pious Proclamations, for the discountenancing and supressing of Prophaneness and Vice'.[60] The most voluble and influential critic of the stage was Jeremy Collier, whose *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* (1698) (hereinafter *A Short View*) was the period's most effective anti-theatrical polemic, which 'instigated the most serious and lengthy public discussion about the legitimacy of the stage in English history'.[61] Critics are divided about the long-term formative impact of Collier on dramatic production; yet Collier's tract clearly served as an effective mechanism for channeling William's dynamic movement for reforms onto the stage.[62] As Loftis asserts: Colllier 'aroused broadly based support for a reform movement' that underpinned 'a sustained governmental effort' to supress the perceived vice and immorality of the stage.[63]

My casting of Collier as a key crusader in what I have argued is a Whiggish reforming zeal is problematized by the clergyman's Jacobite leanings; Collier was a non-juror (an individual who refuses to take the oath of allegiance to William and Mary), who had twice been imprisoned for his opposition to William's administration.[64] In 1696, two years prior to the publication of *A Short View*, Collier was guilty of granting absolution to two condemned men who had conspired in the plot to assassinate William – an act that publicly implied that their treasonous act was not a sin.[65] Yet despite his past offences, Collier received an extraordinary public endorsement from William in the granting of a *nolle prosequi,* which released the clergyman from all further threat of prosecution

[59] Richard Blackmore, preface to *Prince Arthur* [etc] (London, 1695).
[60] John Tillotson, *The Works of the most Reverend Dr John Tillotson* [etc] (London, 1717), 2:399, 2:392.
[61] Matthew J. Kinservik, 'Theatrical Regulation during the Restoration Period,' in Owen, *Companion,* 44.
[62] Robert Hume dismisses any notion of long-term formative influence concluding that '"Collier" mattered quite a lot' to contemporary playwrights and performers 'but very little to the history of drama and theatre'; Robert D. Hume, 'Jeremy Collier and the Future of the London Theater in 1698,' *Studies in Philology* 96, no. 4 (1999): 481.
[63] John Loftis, 'The Social and Literary Contexts,' in *The Revels History of Drama in English*, eds. John Loftis, Richard Southern, Marion Jones and A.H. Scouten (London: Methuen, 1976), 5:29.
[64] Anthony, *Collier*, 4-5.
[65] Ibid., 6.

relating to the Jacobite plot. Colley Cibber spells out the reason for this show of royal forgiveness: '*Collier's* Book was upon the whole thought so laudable a Work, that King *William*, soon after it was publish'd, granted him a *Nolo Prosequi* when he stood answerable to the Law for having absolved two Criminals just before they were executed for High Treason'.[66] Due to the success of Collier's reformist tract, William's administration made the strategic move to publicly endorse the clergyman, appropriating the moral outrage of a Jacobite to support their Whiggish policies.[67] Two years after the foiled Assassination Plot, an event that helped bolster William's waning popularity, the King took the expedient step to sustain public support for his reformist campaign by a pointed show of forgiveness to a clergyman with known sympathies towards the conspirators.

Collier's strong censure of contemporary playwrights for their apparent indecency and undermining of public morality engendered substantial replies. Vanbrugh complains that Collier 'has now left lashing me in particular, and I only have my share in his general Stroke upon all such sinful Wretches, who *attack Religion under every Form*'.[68] Rebutting Collier's claim that drama promotes vice, Vanbrugh voices the familiar defense that the stage's portrayal of vice serves as a negative example: 'the Business of Comedy is to shew People what they shou'd do, by representing them upon the Stage, doing what they shou'd not'.[69] The response by Congreve, one of the hardest hit by Collier's attacks, preaches the same satiric intent:

> Men are to be laugh'd out of their Vices in Comedy; the Business of Comedy is to delight, as well as to instruct: And as vicious People are made asham'd of their Follies or Faults, by seeing them expos'd in a ridiculous manner, so are good People at once both warn'd and diverted at their Expense.[70]

Although Collier's attacks ruffled some contemporary playwrights, many took a more conciliatory approach, publicly agreeing with Collier's position on dramatic propriety, if not his conclusion and methods. John Dennis opposes Collier's contention that satire is contrary to drama's moral purpose, while he readily admits to the abuses of the stage:

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[66] Cibber, *Apology*, 1:274-5.
[67] See Gollapudi, *Moral Reform*, 8.
[68] John Vanbrugh, *A Short Vindication of the Relapse and the Provok'd Wife* [etc] (London, 1698), 36-37.
[69] Vanbrugh, *Vindication*, 45.
[70] William Congreve, *Amendments of M. Collier's false and imperfect citations* [etc] (London, 1698), 8.

> If Mr *Collier* had only attack'd the Corruptions of the Stage […] I should have been so far from blaming him, that I should have Publickly return'd him my Thanks: For the Abuses are so great, that there is a Necessity for the reforming them.[71]

Colley Cibber contends that Collier compelled dramatists to be more circumspect: '[a]nd it must be farther granted that [Collier] calling Dramatick Writers to this strict Account, had a very wholesome Effect upon those, who writ after this Time. They were, now, a great deal more upon their Guard; Indecencies were no longer Wit'.[72] Richard Steele, who probably holds the greatest reputation as a reformer amongst contemporary playwrights, claims that his *The Lying Lover* (1703) was produced '[w]ith just Regard to a reforming Age'.[73] Steele reveals distinctly Collierite sympathies in his declared '[a]mbition to attempt a Comedy, which might be no improper Entertainment in a Christian Commonwealth'; 'by being encourag'd in the Interests of Virtue', he argues, comedy would 'strip Vice of the gay Habit in which it has too long appear'd'.[74] Steele declares himself an admirer of Collier and claims his stagecraft was significantly influenced by his work: 'Mr Collier had […] written against the Immorality of the Stage. I was […] a great Admirer of his Work and took it into my head to write a Comedy in the Severity he required'.[75] Thus despite Collier's apparently adversarial relationship with a number of contemporary dramatists, the drive for reform succeeded in bringing the 'Interest of Virtue' to the forefront of dramatic practice. Testified by their vocal responses, a number of leading playwrights, including Steele, Cibber and Dennis, redirected Collier's criticism of vice and immorality to defend and promote the stage as an instrument of virtue.[76]

The post-Revolution theatre was an important site of Whig cultural production, supported by Whig patronage and driven by Whiggish playwrights and stage managers. The contemporary stage was also buffeted by the powerful socio-political impulse for moral reform. What, then, was the role

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[71] John Dennis, *The Usefulness of the Stage* in *The Critical Works of John Dennis*, ed. Edward N. Hooker (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1939), 1:146.
[72] Cibber, *Apology*, 1:275.
[73] Richard Steele, preface to *The Lying Lover* (London, 1703).
[74] Ibid.
[75] Richard Steele, *Mr Steele's apology for himself and his writings* in *Tracts and Pamphlets by Richard Steele*, ed. Rae Blanchard (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1944), 311-2.
[76] See Brett D. Wilson, *A Race of Female Patriots: Women and Public Spirit on the British Stage, 1688-1745* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, co-published with Rowman & Littlefield, 2012), 14.

of women writers in the Whiggish theatrical industry? Was there any connection between the political changes that swept the post-Revolution stage and the concurrent upsurge in women's dramatic output as witnessed in the phenomenon of 'The Female Wits'? How did female playwrights position themselves in relation to the greater emphasis on morality and virtue in theatrical production? In the next section, I explore women's integral roles in Whig dramatic circles, and the ways in which they capitalized on the theatrical and patronage networks of the day to support their literary endeavours. I also investigate how women writers responded to the moral imperative for reform in ways that shape their dramatic practice and literary personas that have yet to receive adequate attention.

**Women writers and the post-Revolution stage**

The post-Revolution theatrical scene was underpinned by a close-knit and supportive network of dramatists and stage players. Contemporary playwrights supported each other's literary endeavours; they contributed commendatory poems, epilogues and prologues to promote each other's work, and often provided crucial introductions, artistic advice and collaboration.[77] The social and industry networks of the post-Revolution Whig theatre were a valuable source of professional and artistic support for women writers who themselves were active players of the stage.

Trotter's negotiations of contemporary dramatic networks demonstrate the supportive potential of the theatrical industry for female writers. In March 1697, early in her career as a playwright, Trotter initiated a friendship with William Congreve through sending him a commendatory poem to his tragedy, *The Mourning Bride* (1697).[78] Trotter's poem lauds Congreve as heir to the great Dryden: 'He left us thee, his greatest darling son,/ Possessor of the stage, once his alone'.[79] Congreve responded warmly to Trotter's overtures, writing to her to thank her and praising her poem as 'the first thing, that ever happened to me, upon which I should make it my choice to be vain'.[80] Trotter's poetic tribute can also be seen as a calculated effort to contribute to the printed version of

[77] Prologues and epilogues were also executed on a commercial basis; see James Anderson Winn, *John Dryden and His World* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1987), 363-4.
[78] Catharine Trotter, 'To Mr Congreve, on his Tragedy, the *Mourning Bride*,' in Trotter, *Works*, 2:564-65.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Congreve to Catharine Trotter, 15 March 1697, in Congreve, *Letters*, 199-200.

Congreve's popular play; Congreve appeared aware of this when he apologetically explains to Trotter that her poem had arrived too late to be included: 'And since I am deprived of the recommendation you designed me, I will be obliged to no other, till I have some future opportunity of preferring yours to every body's else'.[81] Trotter's efforts elicit a promise of a visit by Congreve; Congreve explains that he will make the call together with 'Mr *Betterton*', the well-known actor and stage manager who played the leading role in *The Mourning Bride* and will go on to assume the role of Arwide in Trotter's *Revolution of Sweden*.[82] Congreve's letter concludes with a promise to provide Trotter with the printed version of his play as soon as it had been presented to its dedicatee.[83] Trotter's and Congreve's initial acquaintance developed into a cordial friendship as testified by their later correspondence, which refers to social visits paid to one other and includes friendly discussions on Congreve's health.[84]

Congreve also appeared to have had some artistic influence on Trotter's dramatic work. As Rebecca Merrens points out, Trotter's *Fatal Friendship* (1698) is a feminist reworking of Congreve's *The Mourning Bride*.[85] Although Congreve retired from playwriting after the performance of *The Way of the World* in 1700, he remained actively involved in the theatrical industry and Trotter continued to benefit professionally from their friendship.[86] She sent an early draft of her tragedy, *The Revolution of Sweden*, to Congreve in 1703, who responded with literary advice on the play.[87] Trotter's relations with Congreve and Betterton probably assisted the production of her drama which was performed at the new 'Kit-Cat' Theatre in Haymarket, to which Betterton's company had relocated in 1705, and where Congreve assumed the role of co-patentee. Attesting to the close and overlapping literary and political circles of the day, Trotter's aforementioned tragedy was dedicated to Lady Henrietta

[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid.
[84] See Congreve to Catharine Trotter, 2 November 1703, in Congreve, *Letters,* 212.
[85] Rebecca Merrens, 'Unmanned with thy Words: Regendering Tragedy in Manley and Trotter,' in *Broken Boundaries: Women & Feminism in Restoration Drama*, ed. Katherine M. Quinsey (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 46.
[86] Congreve remained active in the London stage through his role as co-stage manager of the Queen's Theatre at Haymarket, and the composition of words for music for the musical stage. See, Ferdinand and McKenzie, 'Congreve'.
[87] For more details on Congreve's literary advice on Trotter's play, see p.81.

Godolphin – the eldest daughter of the Duke of Marlborough – who was also a long-term paramour of Congreve.

Another of Trotter's connections in the theatrical scene was the playwright George Farquhar, whose debut play, *Love and a Bottle* (1698), was produced in December 1698 in the same year that Trotter's *Fatal Friendship* was performed. As extant correspondence reveals, Farquhar wrote to Trotter to commend her *Fatal Friendship*, enclosing a printed copy of his *Love and a Bottle* in return for 'the favour and honour showed me, in your appearance on my third night'.[88] The third night of a play's performance was the author's benefit night and a primary source of income for a dramatist, who received the takings for the evening's performance after deducting the theatre's operating costs.[89] Trotter's attendance at Farquhar's author's benefit night is suggestive of one of the ways in which contemporary playwrights supported each other's productions. In return, Farquhar published a glowing commendatory poem to Trotter: '*To the Ingenious Lady. Author of the* Fatal Friendship*, design'd for a Recommendatory Copy to her Play*' (1701). Trotter was also connected to John Hughes, the Whig poet known for his Williamite panegyrics: *The Triumph of Peace* (1698) and *The Court of Neptune* (1699). Hughes contributed a commendatory poem to the published volume of Trotter's *Fatal Friendship*, in which he praises her as a stage reformer and the modern equivalent of the Virgilian heroine, Camilla.[90] The published version of Trotter's debut play, *Agnes de Castro*, includes a prologue by the Restoration playwright, William Wycherley. Wycherley's comment that his contribution was made 'at the Authors request' implies that he was not a particular connection of Trotter's, but reveals the way in which a woman writer can draw upon the support of contemporary dramatic circles even in her first outing as a dramatist.[91]

The contribution of paratextual materials such as commendatory poems, epilogues and prologues was a visible and popular means of mutual support for contemporary writers. Congreve's

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[88] George Farquhar to C. Cockburn, *c.* 1699, Cockburn Papers, MS Add. 4264, f.102, British Library, London.

[89] The author's benefit was restricted to new plays during which he received royalties after deducting the theatre's charges for the third, sixth and possibly ninth nights. See Emmett L. Avery, introduction to *The London Stage,* part 2, *1700-1729* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1960), xcvii.

[90] John Hughes, 'To the Ingenious AUTHOR, ON HER Tragedy, call'd Fatal Friendship,' in *Fatal Friendship*, by Catharine Trotter (London, 1698).

[91] William Wycherley, prologue to *Agnes de Castro*, by Catharine Trotter (London, 1696).

*The Way of the World* included commendatory verse by his theatrical colleague, Richard Steele. The Whig playwright, William Burnaby, contributed the epilogue to Centlivre's *The Perjur'd Husband* (1700), and the equally Whiggish Charles Johnson provided the epilogue for her *The Gamester*. The support crossed partisan divides too. In 1693, Dryden signalled his public endorsement of his protégé, Congreve, as his literary heir in a poem – 'To My Dear Friend Mr Congreve' – which was published with Congreve's *The Double Dealer*. Not only do commendatory poems help promote the publication of a play or volume of poems, as we have seen in Trotter's eagerness to contribute to the printed version of Congreve's play, the inclusion of a writer's poem is a means of sharing the prominence of a more established writer. Sarah Fyge Egerton did not write for the stage, but she deftly capitalized on her theatrical connections to support her career as a poet, suggestive of the close connections between dramatic and poetic production. As we have seen, Egerton's friendship with Manley probably resulted in Egerton's participation in the poetic collection which Manley organized, *The Nine Muses*. Three years after the publication of *The Nine Muses*, the friends that Egerton had made in dramatic circles helped support the publication of her 1703 volume of poems, which was prefaced by glowing commendatory verse by Pix and Centlivre. As Egerton highlights, these female colleagues had read her verse prior to publication and 'favour'd' them 'with their Complements'.[92] Egerton's interest in and links to the stage are articulated in some of her published poems, including verse addresses to a contemporary actress (probably Anne Bracegirdle) and the actor George Powell,[93] and a pastoral dialogue effusively dedicated 'TO THE Most Learn'd, and Ingenious, Mr. *William Congreve*'.[94] As discussed, until their relations frayed under partisan pressure, the poets of *The Nine Muses* formed a mutually supportive female literary network. Manley composed a commendatory poem to the published version of Trotter's *Agnes de Castro* (1696), and both Trotter and Pix contributed commendatory verse for the publication of Manley's drama, *The Royal Mischief* (1696). The published versions of Trotter's *Fatal Friendship* and *The Unhappy*

[92] Sarah Fyge Egerton, dedication of *Poems on Several Occasions, Together with a Pastoral* (London, 1703).
[93] Egerton's address to Bracegirdle is 'To Marcella'; her poems to Powell are 'Delia *to* Phraartes *on his Playing* Caesar Borgia', and 'Delia *to* Phraartes on his mistake of three Ladies writing to him'. All three poems were published in her 1703 collection.
[94] Sarah Fyge Egerton, 'The fond Shepherdess. A Pastoral,' appended to *Poems*.

*Penitent* (1701) include commendatory verse by Sarah Piers, and Trotter subsequently dedicated her *Love at a Loss* (1701) to Piers.

Amongst the three women writers, Centlivre with her long, successful career as a playwright had the greatest number of connections to dramatic circles, including friendships with Richard Steele, Nicholas Rowe, George Farquhar, Mary Pix, Catharine Trotter, William Burnaby, Charles Johnson, and Ambrose Philips. All these writers were Whig sympathizers, and Steele, Johnson, and Philips belonged to Addison's circle of Whig writers who congregated at Button's Coffee-house. An account of Centlivre's initial foray into playwriting by Abel Boyer, the Huguenot writer and Whig apologist, demonstrates the ways in which the theatrical network can help support the staging of a debut play by a then obscure woman writer. Although best known as a historian and journalist, Boyer had forged some theatrical connections from the staging of his play *Achilles* at Drury Lane in 1699. Boyer was an early literary connection of Centlivre's and edited the collection of letters, *Letters of Wit, Politicks, and Morality* (1701), to which Centlivre contributed, and he later composed an obituary to Centlivre after her death. In a letter to Centlivre of May 1700, Boyer discusses his efforts to introduce Centlivre's debut play, *The Perjur'd Husband* (1700), to key members of the theatrical industry.[95] According to Boyer, he has shown the manuscript to a 'Mr B….', a possible reference to Thomas Betterton or the writer William Burnaby (who later contributed the epilogue to Centlivre's play), which met with a cool reception.[96] However, Boyer is confident the play will receive the endorsement of 'Mr F….' and 'Mr W….', probable references to George Farquhar and Farquhar's friend, the actor Robert Wilks, both of whom Boyer believes 'will stand [Centlivre's] Friends in this affair'.[97] That Centlivre's play was produced at the Drury Lane theatre soon after in October 1700 suggests that Boyer's, Farquhar's and Wilks' efforts were successful.

Farquhar's generous help and his usefulness as a theatrical contact probably underpinned Centlivre's subsequent efforts to cultivate a friendship with him. Just as Trotter had initiated a friendship with Congreve through penning a glowing commendatory poem, Centlivre composed a

[95] '*Mr.* B----r to *Astrea*,' in *Letters of Wit, Politicks and Morality*, ed. Abel Boyer (London, 1701), 358.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid.

flattering poem in Farquhar's honour – '*To Mr.* Farquhar, *upon his Comedy Call'd* A Trip to the Jubilee' (1701) – which she passed on to Boyer as an introduction to Farquhar. This developed into a close and even flirtatious friendship between Centlivre and Farquhar. The impression of a romantic dimension to Centlivre's and Farquhar's relations is fostered in their correspondence in a published collection of letters edited by Tom Brown, which depicts Celadon (Farquhar) engaged in a flirtation with Astrea (Centlivre) and attempting to persuade her into a physical intimacy.[98] Given the often considerable artistic liberties taken by publishers in providing entertaining material for their public, it is difficult to gauge the reliability of these epistolary accounts. In 1701, both Farquhar and Centlivre, to a different extent, were rising playwrights and the publicity surrounding a 'romance' could be a way of increasing their public profile and promoting their careers. Notwithstanding the possible exaggeration of a romantic liaison, the letters do appear to suggest that Centlivre and Farquhar had a close connection. Centlivre composed a total of three verse epistles to Farquhar, while he contributed the prologue to Centlivre's *The Platonick Lady*, which was 'the only prologue Farquhar wrote for an author who was also his friend'.[99] According to Centlivre's modern biographer, F.P. Lock, they remained friends until his death in 1706, the year preceding Centlivre's marriage to Joseph Centlivre in 1707.[100]

Centlivre was also closely associated with Nicholas Rowe, author of the Williamite military drama, *Tamerlane,* who popularized the sub-genre of the 'she-tragedy' in plays such as *The Tragedy of Jane Shore* (1714). According to Centlivre's contemporary biographer and friend, John Mottley, Rowe 'had a great Value for [Centlivre]'.[101] Rowe provided literary assistance and support to Centlivre, helping her with the composition of *The Cruel Gift* (1716) and contributing the prologue to

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[98] *A Pacquet from Will's*, ed. Thomas Brown (London, 1701). For the identification of the correspondence between Farquhar and Centlivre in this volume, see Shirley Strum Kenny, introduction to 'Miscellaneous Prose and Poetry,' in *The Works of George Farquhar* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), 2:414-5. Hereinafter the shortened citation, 'Farquhar, *Works,*' refers to this edition.

[99] Shirley Strum Kenny, introduction to 'Prologues and Epilogues,' in Farquhar, *Works*, 2:398. Centlivre's addresses to Farquhar are: '*To Mr.* Farquhar, *upon his Comedy Call'd* A Trip to the Jubilee' (1701); 'An Epistle in Verse. Astrea to Damon' (1701); 'A Copy of Verses. Shut up in a Snuff-Box' (1701).

[100] F.P. Lock, *Susanna Centlivre* (Boston: Twayne, 1979), 126.

[101] John Mottley, *A Compleat List of All the English Dramatic Poets,* appended to *Scanderberg*, by Thomas Whincop (London, 1747), 185.

Centlivre's *The Gamester*.[102] Centlivre's warm sympathies for Rowe are expressed in her verse epistle addressed to Rowe and a pastoral elegy which she published after his death.[103] Another mentor and close friend of Centlivre's was her fellow poet from *The Nine Muses*, Mary Pix. According to contemporary reports, Pix had assisted Centlivre with the composition of *The Busie Body* (1709).[104] Centlivre repaid her debt to Pix by staging a benefit performance of *The Busie Body* for Pix's estate following the latter's death in 1709.[105]

An important literary connection of Centlivre was the Whig polemicist and dramatist, Richard Steele. Centlivre was evidently so eager for Steele to contribute a promised epilogue to *The Busie Body* that she sent him a reminder in the form of a verse epistle, which flatteringly describes him as the 'immortal Dick Steel'.[106] Steele provided useful assistance to Centlivre's dramatic career, writing puffs to promote two of her highly successful plays, *The Busie Body* (1709) and *The Wonder: A Woman Keeps a Secret* (1714) (hereinafter *The Wonder*). In a puff published on the first day that *The Wonder* was performed, Steele generously lauds Centlivre as 'one British Lady who employs her Genius for Drama, it would be a shameful Reflection on the Polite of both Sexes, should she want any Encouragement the Town can give her'.[107]

Women writers also benefitted from the Whiggish patronage networks of the stage. Patronage of drama in the period assumed a number of forms. The Kit-Cats' sponsorship of a new theatre was a generous and high-profile method of providing largesse directly to the industry. Patronage also took the form of official posts provided by Whig politicians to leading dramatists, as we have witnessed in the case of Congreve and Rowe. Royal figures too provided patronage through royal benefits and command performances, as did George I and his family. The most common form of patronage of drama was the dedication of a printed version of a play to a public figure, an act underpinned by a variety of objectives. A prominent patron can help legitimize a dramatist's work, as

[102] See 'Address to the World,' xii.
[103] See Centlivre's 'From the Country to Mr Rowe in Town, MDCCXVIII' (1720), and 'A Pastoral to the Honoured Memory of Mr Rowe' (1719).
[104] See *Post Boy*, May 26-28, 1709.
[105] Ibid.
[106] *Original and Genuine Letters sent to the Tatler and The Spectator* (London, 1725), 2:34.
[107] *Lover* 27 (April 27, 1714).

with Trotter's dedication of her debut play, *Agnes de Castro*, to the Earl of Dorset, the then powerful Lord Chamberlain, whose position exerted considerable influence over theatrical operations. Dryden, who was on the losing side of the post-Revolution partisan divide, was probably seeking protection when he dedicated *Don Sebastian* (1689) to a figure of unimpeachable Whig credentials, the Earl of Leicester, brother of the Whig martyr, Algernon Sydney.[108] A dedication often signals a writer's political sympathies and identification with a public figure; Rowe dedicated *Ulysses* (1706) to Lord Godolphin, Anne's Lord Treasurer, at a time when the statesman was facing escalating opposition to his war programme and personal attacks from high-Tory quarters. Dedications were also a useful source of supplementary income for writers through gifts and monetary rewards received from a patron. While women were excluded from the sinecures and postings available to their male counterparts, female dramatists cultivated influential patrons not only to indicate their political allegiances, but as a means of gaining endorsement, support, and direct gifts, monetary or otherwise, from their dedicatees. That women writers were able to obtain prominent dedicatees for their works is suggestive of the perceived value of their writings; as Dustin Griffin highlights, patronage was a two-way transaction and a 'patron "invests" symbolic capital in a poem or play with the hope that its success will reflect well on him as an arbiter of taste'.[109]

As we have seen, contemporary male dramatists demonstrate a Whig bias in their choice of patron. The choice of dedicatees by our female playwrights reveals a similar partisan bias. Trotter's theatrical patrons were predominantly Whig figures. Her *Agnes de Castro* was dedicated to the Earl of Dorset, the famous Whig patron of the arts and Lord Chamberlain of William's reign. The wording of Trotter's dedication implies that they had previously been in contact and that she had submitted the play to Dorset for his perusal prior to its production: '[a]nd since 'tis from Your Sentence it has ventur'd thus far, it now Claims a sort of Title to Your Lordships Protection'.[110] The 'Protection' referred to reflects the authority and cultural validation that the Lord Chamberlain's patronage provides to the work – not an insubstantial boon for a young woman writer launching her debut play,

[108] Loftis, *Politics*, 25.
[109] Dustin H. Griffin, *Literary Patronage in England, 1650-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 25.
[110] Catharine Trotter, dedication of *Agnes de Castro*.

particularly if we remember that Aphra Behn produced drama for the Restoration theatre for nine years before gaining a patron.[111] The dedicatee of Trotter's *Love at a Loss* (1701) was Sarah Piers, Trotter's friend and one of the co-contributors to *The Nine Muses,* a minor Whig grandee married to Sir George Piers, a clerk of the privy seal in William's government.[112] Trotter's *The Unhappy Penitent* (1701) was dedicated to the great Whig patron, Charles Montagu. The dedication to Montagu in 1701, the year that he faced impeachment proceedings in a Tory-controlled Parliament, can be seen as a sign of support for the beleagured Junto lord, who would later lose his seat on the Privy Council on the accession of Anne in 1702.[113]

Trotter's heroic drama, *The Revolution of Sweden* (1706), was dedicated to Lady Henrietta Godolphin, the Duke of Marlborough's daughter and heir who was also the daughter-in-law of Anne's Lord Treasurer, Lord Godolphin. Trotter's link to the Marlborough circle is significant to her interest in Whiggish militarism, and will be explored in greater detail in my reading of Trotter's drama. As Milhous and Hume point out, there is 'maddeningly little evidence' on rewards for play dedications, and we do not have any evidence that Trotter received monetary benefits from any of her dedicatees.[114] However it seems likely that Montagu at least would have rewarded her given his widely-held reputation as a liberal benefactor – it is said that 'no one who applied to [him] went unrewarded' – and accounts of his generosity to Trotter's fellow 'Nine Muses'.[115] When Egerton dedicated her 1703 poetic volume to Montagu, the statesman, she reports, responded warmly and 'made [her] a noble present'.[116] A poetic tribute to Montagu by Centlivre earned her 'a Present of a fine repeating Gold Watch'.[117] In the case of Trotter's dedication to Lady Henrietta, we should note that Henrietta's mother, the Duchess of Marlborough, effected the reinstatement of Trotter's family

[111] Deborah C. Payne, '"And Poets Shall by Patron-Princes Live": Aphra Behn and Patronage,' in Schofield and Macheski, *Curtain Calls*, 111.
[112] George Piers would later serve as a senior officer in the Duke of Marlborough's army; see Holly Faith Nelson, 'Piers [nee Roydon], Sarah, Lady Piers (d. 1719),' in *ODNB* (Oxford University Press, 2004), accessed 27 February 2015, https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:4563/10.1093/ref:odnb/74078.
[113] See Somerset, *Queen Anne*, 192.
[114] Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume, *The Publication of Plays in London 1660-1800: Playwrights, Publishers, and the Market* (London: British Library, 2015), 176.
[115] Griffin, *Patronage,* 23.
[116] See, *Gentleman's Magazine* 51 (March 1781): 121.
[117] Mottley, *Dramatic Poets*, 192.

pension through the intercession of the Whig bishop, Gilbert Burnet. Trotter's *Revolution* was produced close to the time that she also published two effusive panegyrics to the Duke of Marlborough, lauding his exploits in the continental war; the Duchess allegedly attended the production of the play, probably to reciprocate Trotter's public tributes to the Duchess' daughter and husband.[118]

A closer look at Trotter's dedication to Montagu reveals her engagement with the important theatrical development: the moral reform of the stage. As Trotter asserts:

> Your Lordship, who are not only allow'd the most excellent Judge, but the most Generous Patron of the Sacred Art; and to reform the Abuses of it is an Employment not unworthy of your high Station, or to be mingled with the most weighty Business of the Publick; when the great Cardinal Richlieu was laying the Foundations of a glorious Monarchy, the Establishment and Reformation of the Theatre was not thought below his care; and the wisest Common-wealths […] contrive that [the people's] very Pleasures be made their Instruction.[119]

Trotter lauds Halifax for his statesmanship and patronage role, and appeals to him to use his 'Publick' influence to support the reformation of the stage, employing the example of Richelieu, the seventeenth-century French minister and patron of the arts, as a model. Thus beneath the courtesy and respect shown to her patron, Trotter assertively gives advice to a leading public figure on the theatre's perceived civic function to inculcate moral instruction, positioning herself as drama's proponent of virtue. Trotter welcomed the dominant emphasis on morality and took up the reformist call with zeal. As she explains in her private correspondence: 'the great end of tragedy [is] to recommend heroic virtue', while the 'true design of comedy […] is to expose the vices and follies of men by an agreeable ridicule; or to make virtue appear lovely, and vice infamous'.[120] The dedication of Trotter's *Fatal Friendship* (1698), published in the same month as Collier's tract, directly echoes his famous maxim:

> 'its End is the most noble, to discourage Vice, and recommend a firm unshaken Virtue'.[121]
>
> 'The business of *Plays* is to recommend Vertue and discountenance Vice'.[122]

[118] On the likely attendance of the Duchess and her family at the performance of Trotter's play, see p.76, n37.
[119] Catharine Trotter, dedication of *The Unhappy Penitent* (London, 1701).
[120] Trotter to Anne Hepburn, 6 December 1731, in Trotter, *Works*, 2:258.
[121] Trotter, dedication of *Fatal Friendship*.

The success of Trotter's self-fashioning as a proponent of virtue and a morally upright woman writer is apparent in contemporary accounts. A commendatory poem to the published volume of her *Fatal Friendship* pays tribute to Trotter as drama's moral reformer 'who check[s] the Rage/ Of Reigning Vice, that has debauch'd the Stage,/ And dare Shew Vertue in a vicious Age'.[123] John Hughes lauds Trotter as 'the first of Stage-Reformers […] No Vicious Stains pollute [her] moral Scene'.[124] Trotter's interaction with Farquhar also underscores her role as drama's arbiter of moral judgment. In a letter to Trotter, Farquhar complains that his comedy, *Love and a Bottle*, was 'scandalously' accused of 'affronting the ladies'.[125] As if acknowledging Trotter's reputation as drama's leading female advocate of morality, Farquhar explains that he is sending her a copy of his comedy in order to secure her valued approval: as 'an argument of its innocence, he sent it to trial before one of the fairest of the sex, and the best judge'.[126] Gildon/Langbaine's poetic register commends the '[c]hastity of [Trotter's] Person' as well as her 'wit, beauty and intellect'.[127] A contemporary tract favourably describes the morality of Trotter's writings:

> A celebrated Female in use, has lately convinc'd you, in her *Fatal Friendship*, that 'tis possible to entertain, with all the Judgment, Wit, and Beauty of Poetry; without *shocking our senses*, with intolerable prophaneness or obscenity.[128]

One of the numerous respondents of the Collier controversy, this anonymous essay admonishes Congreve for the perceived immorality of his stagecraft. However, it contrasts Congreve with Trotter, the latter praised as a positive example of a morally upright playwright, who successfully entertains her audience without resorting to 'prophaneness or obscenity'. Trotter's eighteenth-century editor, Thomas Birch, emphasizes her morality as her distinguishing quality, claiming that Trotter withdrew from her acquaintance with Delarivier Manley 'on account of the licentiousness of both [Manley's]

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[122] Collier, *Short View*, 1.
[123] Anon., 'To The Author of *Fatal-Friendship*,' in Trotter, *Fatal Friendship*.
[124] Hughes, 'the Ingenious AUTHOR'.
[125] George Farquhar to C. Cockburn, *c.* 1699, Cockburn Papers.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Charles Gildon and Gerard Langbaine, *The Lives and Characters of the English Dramatick Poets* (London, 1698), 179.
[128] *A Letter to Mr. Congreve on His Pretended Amendments* [etc] (London, 1698), 36-37.

writings and conduct'.[129] It is telling that the harsh public criticism of Trotter by Manley seeks to assail Trotter's reputation for virtue; Trotter is accused of hypocrisy in *The New Atalantis*: of adopting 'an air of *Virtue pretended*' and 'an excellent mask called religion'.[130]

Along with her contemporaries, Joseph Addison, Richard Steele and John Dennis, Trotter numbered amongst the leading moralist proponents of drama. They shrewdly internalized the moral impulses impacting the stage to promote the theatre as a site of moral instruction, serving, as Trotter contends, to 'animate the Mind to Virtue'.[131] Trotter's fashioning as a moral exemplar and reformer of the stage enables her to position herself within mainstream impulses rather than be relegated to the margins. By carving out a niche for herself in the dominant discourse of virtue and morality, Trotter justifies her entrance into the androcentric arena of writing, enabling her to defy social strictures on female writing with relatively greater ease. When she defends her reformist role as retrieving 'that Credit which the abuses of it has I fear with too great reason lost', Trotter strategically positions herself as a mediating female influence and champion of morality in a male-dominated literary establishment.[132]

Trotter's compatriot, Susanna Centlivre, displays a similar penchant for cultivating Whig patronage. Contemporary accounts by Centlivre's friend and biographer, John Mottley, provide useful information on the material rewards she received from her dedicatees. Centlivre dedicated *The Busie Body* (1709) to Baron Somers, the Whig patron and lord of the Junto. Centlivre's *The Man's Bewitch'd* (1709) was dedicated to William Cavendish, the Duke of Devonshire, the prominent Whig and Lord Stewart to Anne's household. Perhaps in the hope of preferment for her husband, the dedication alludes to Joseph Centlivre's post as Yeoman of the Mouth in the the royal household; Centlivre unabashedly refers to her 'Gratitude, and […] Ambition' in her choice of patron:

> But since my Husband has the honour to serve Her Majesty, under the Command of Your Grace, as he did the late King of glorious Memory, under that of your noble Father, I cou'd not be prevail'd upon to alter my Resolution

[129] Birch, 'Life,' xlvii.
[130] Delarivier Manley, *The Selected Works of Delarivier Manley*, eds. Rachel Carnell and Ruth Herman (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2005), 2:184.
[131] Catharine Trotter, epistle dedicatory of *The Revolution of Sweden* (London, 1706).
[132] Trotter, dedication of *The Unhappy Penitent*.

> of prefixing your Grace's Name in the front of this Poem, at once to shew my Gratitude, and my Ambition.[133]

Centlivre's *The Cruel Gift* (1717) was dedicated to Eustace Budgell, the Whig writer and a cousin of Joseph Addison, who responded with a generous gift: 'a Present, on that Account, of a Diamond Ring worth about twenty Guineas'.[134] This was a significant amount, given that Bernard Lintot only paid Centlivre ten pounds each for the sale of the copyrights for *Love's Contrivance* and *The Busie Body.*[135] Centlivre gained an even greater reward for the dedication of *Mar-plot* (1711) to the Duke of Portland who 'made the Author a Present of forty Guineas'.[136] Centlivre's poetic tribute to Eugene of Savoy (Marlborough's military ally on the continent), printed together with the published version of her *The Perplex'd Lovers* (1712), earned her a 'Gold Snuff-box' valued at thirty-five pounds.[137] The publication of Centlivre's panegyric together with her play is an interesting example of the connection between the publication of verse and drama in the period, and the ways in which writers capitalized on the publication of their plays to circulate and support their poetic works.

Centlivre's relations with another Whig patron, James Craggs, who was appointed Secretary at War in 1717 and replaced Joseph Addison as Secretary of State for the Southern Department in 1718 , reveals the intriguing links between female players of the stage and prominent Whig officials. Centlivre dedicated *The Gotham Election* (1715) (a political farce that was never performed) to Craggs whom she lauds for his staunch support for 'the Protestant Succession, and the Interest of *Britain*'.[138] Craggs' patronage was evidently secured through the intercession of Centlivre's friend, the actress Anne Bracegirdle, and earned the playwright a generous reward. Bracegirdle was known for her close connections to a number of Whig politicians (she was also an intimate friend and possible lover of Congreve), and appeared to act as a conduit for the patronage networks of the

[133] Susanna Centlivre, dedication of *The Man's Bewitch'd* (London, 1709).
[134] Mottley, *Dramatic Poets*, 191.
[135] See Lock, *Centlivre*, 18.
[136] Mottley, *Dramatic Poets*, 190.
[137] Ibid.
[138] Susanna Centlivre, dedication of *The Gotham Election* (London, 1715).

theatre.[139] As Mottley describes:

> *The Gotham Election* […was] printed and dedicated to Mr Secretary *Craggs*, who made her a Present of twenty Guineas, by the hands of Mrs *Bracegirdle*, who had got leave for her to dedicate it to him; and when she told him he was very liberal, and sent the Author more than she could reasonably expect, […] he told her, he considered not so much the Merit of the Piece, as what was proper to be done by a Secretary of State.[140]

This account reveals the interconnecting relations between dramatists, actors and political patrons, as well as the expectations that public officials would provide ample patronage to the stage. Craggs' generosity may have also been linked to his approval of Centlivre's outspoken support for Whiggish politics. In May 1714, at the height of the political controversy of the 'Writ Demand' during which the Whigs were manoeuvring for the Duke of Cambridge, the Hanoverian prince, to be invited to take up his seat in the House of Lords against the express desire of Queen Anne, Centlivre took the risky step of dedicating the published version of *The Wonder* (1714) to the Duke. Writing a year later, Centlivre alludes to Craggs' support during the controversy: 'YOU who so generously espous'd my Interest when you knew my Intention of dedicating to His Royal Highness, then Duke of *Cambridge*'.[141]

Centlivre's resolute support for the Hanoverian dynasty during Anne's reign, coupled with the publication of her glowing panegyrics to the Hanoverian succession, gained her valuable royal patronage after George I's assumption of the throne. Again, we see an interplay between dramatic and poetic practice, when Centlivre's poetic tributes to the Hanoverians were rewarded by royal support for her theatrical productions. Centlivre was favoured by command royal performances of her plays, which included productions for the author's benefit as well as gifts from the royal family.[142] The presence of the Hanoverian royals at her productions would have enhanced theatrical receipts not only from the fees paid for the royal box but from admission charges from an audience eager to

[139] See Congreve, *Letters*, 248.
[140] Mottley, *Dramatic Poets*, 191.
[141] Centlivre, dedication of *Gotham Election*.
[142] See Mottley, *Dramatic Poets*, 190.

witness not just the play but royal personages.[143] Three of Centlivre's plays were staged by command of George Augustus, the Prince of Wales, including *The Wonder* on 16 December 1714, *The Cruel Gift* (1717) on 3 May 1717, and the highly successful *The Busie Body* (1709) on 22 and 23 October 1717.[144] King George I himself commanded *The Busie Body* at Drury Lane on 17 March 1720 in a benefit performance for Centlivre.[145] The favour shown to Centlivre by the Hanoverian royals appeared to have been the subject of contemporary news; the *St James's Journal* reports that it was rumoured that the King intended 'to see the New Play call'd the ARTIFICE, on the sixth night, for the Benefit of the Author'.[146]

Like her contemporary, Catharine Trotter, Centlivre's dramatic practice was also impacted by the socio-political drive for moral reform. Yet unlike Trotter's emphatic embrace of a reformist role, Centlivre was more equivocal about drama's reform project altogether. Nevertheless the pattern of her public pronouncements reflects the way in which dramatists were compelled to shift their allegiance to a moral agenda in the face of socio-political pressure. In a letter written in 1700, the year of her stage debut, Centlivre reveals her ambivalence about pressing comedy into the service of morality and explains her understanding of the function of comedy: 'I think the main design of Comedy is to make us laugh: Now if the poet can be so happy as to divert our Spleen, 'tis but just he should be commended for it'.[147] The preface to her *Love's Contrivance* (1703) displays a similar sentiment, while highlighting the difficulty of reconciling Collierite strictures with the demands of morally-inclined theatregoers who still expect to be entertained: the critics 'cry up Aristotle's Rules as the most essential part of the Play', while the audience 'relishes nothing so well as Humour lightly tost up with Wit, and drest with Modesty and Air'.[148]

Centlivre's sentiments were shared by her friend, George Farquhar, whose public pronouncements underscore the view that the primary function of comedy is to entertain. Farquhar's

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[143] See Avery, *London Stage*, clxi.
[144] See Bowyer, *Centlivre*, 154.
[145] Ibid.
[146] *St James's Journal,* October 4, 1722. Centlivre produced *The Artifice* in 1723.
[147] Susanna Centlivre, 'Astrea's Answer to Mr B---r [Abel Boyer],' in *The Complete Works of George Farquhar*, ed. Charles Stonehill (London: Nonesuch Press, 1930), 2:260-1.
[148] Susanna Centlivre, preface to *Love's Contrivance* (London, 1703).

artistic viewpoint, ventriloquized by a female character in his novella, *The Adventures of Covent Garden* (1699), lies very close to Centlivre's professed sentiments: 'I suppose the chief design of Plays is to please the People, and get the Play-House and Poet a Livelyhood'.[149] In a poetic tribute to Farquhar, Centlivre defends her friend against Collierite attacks while simultaneously acknowledging the need to navigate the moral imperatives of the day. Her poem makes amusing references to 'the learned *Collier*', whose moralizing lessons to 'the Rhiming Trade' succeeds in destroying artistic creativity:

> For since the learned *Collier* first essay'd
> To teach religion to the Rhiming Trade,
> The *Comick* Muse in *Tragick* posture sad,
> And seem'd to mourn the Downfall of her State;
> Her eldest Sons she often did implore
> That they her ancient Credit would restore.
> Strait they essay'd, but quickly to their cost:
> They found that all their industry was lost.
> For since the *Double Entendre* was forbid,
> They could not get a Clap for what they did.[150]

Centlivre uses humour to convey her message which is abundantly clear. She condemns Collier's strict reforms which she sees as having a damaging, stultifying effect on artistic impulses; a female figure embodies this distress: 'The *Comick* Muse in *Tragick* posture sad […] to mourn the Downfall of her State'. Collier's rigid notion of acceptable stage language which prohibits the sexual innuendo of earlier Restoration comedy is seen as an impediment to audience enjoyment, thus preventing dramatists such as herself from gaining compensatory appreciation for 'their industry' and work: 'For since the *Double Entendre* was forbid,/ They could not get a Clap for what they did'. Ironically, Centlivre employs a *double entendre* that Collier's dramatic injunctions 'forbid': her reference to 'Clap' mischievously alludes to the sexually transmitted disease, as well as to audience applause which determined a play's success and hence its continued run. Couching her message in irony and humour, Centlivre draws attention to the professional difficulties facing playwrights in a reformist age; while having to conform to more rigid standards of moral propriety, drama remains underpinned

[149] Farquhar, *Works*, 2:270.
[150] Centlivre, '*To Mr.* Farquhar *upon his Comedy Call'd* A Trip to the Jubilee,' in Farquhar, *Complete Works*, 261-2. This refers to the edition by Stonehill.

by the profit motive and the success of productions rests on audience enjoyment of comedies whose 'main design […] is to make us laugh'.

By 1705, however, we see a marked shift in Centlivre's position when she appears to succumb to public pressure and revise her earlier opinions. Significantly, this coincides with renewed calls for more stringent stage regulation at this point during Anne's reign, after the traumatic aftermath of the Great Storm of November 1703, which aroused widespread providential claims that the calamity was a visitation of God's anger.[151] Thus in the dedications of her gaming plays, *The Gamester* (1705) and *The Basset Table* (1705), Centlivre declares a seemingly Collierite objective. Her dedication of *The Gamester* to George, Earl of Huntingdon, an aristocratic soldier allied to the Whig cause, contends that '[t]he Design of this Piece were to divert, without that Vicious Strain which usually attends the Comick Muse, and according to the first intent of Plays, recommend Morality […] I dare affirm there is nothing Immodest, nor immoral in it'.[152] In the dedication of *The Basset Table*, produced in the same year, Centlivre pointedly declares: 'through the whole Piece, I have had a tender regard to good Manners, and by the main Drift of it, endeavour'd to Ridicule and Correct one of the most reigning Vices of the Age'.[153] Public pressure to conform was acutely felt by Centlivre and, unlike her contemporary, William Congreve, who continued to earn a living after his retirement from the stage through offices and sinecures obtained through his patrons, Centlivre was highly dependent on the income generated by her dramatic writings. As Lock points out, Centlivre was financially pressed at the time and was subsequently compelled to join a company of strolling players in 1706 to augment her funds.[154]

So while the serious and intellectually-inclined Trotter positively embraced her culture's reformist impulses, the pragmatic Centlivre, a consummate 'professional, much concerned with the money to be made from her plays',[155] compromised with contemporary demands producing successful comedies that conform to dramatic proprieties and that 'without Smut can make an

[151] Field, *Kit-Cat*, 135.
[152] Susanna Centlivre, dedication of *The Gamester* (London, 1705).
[153] Susanna Centlivre, dedication of *The Basset Table* (London, 1705).
[154] Lock, *Centlivre,* 18.
[155] John Loftis, *Comedy and Society from Congreve to Fielding* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959), 64.

Audience smile'.[156] For Centlivre, morality was no didactic endeavour and she was keenly aware of the need to come to terms with her post-Collierite age and maintain the requisite moral attitudes in her drama 'by sanitizing dramatic language to free it of the growing number of words and phrases that were no longer tolerated in the theatre'.[157] Positioning themselves within the dominant moralist discourse was an important authorial strategy for both Trotter and Centlivre. Trotter capitalized on the drive for reform to carve out an empowering role for herself as drama's arbiter of virtue. Centlivre, the commercially-minded professional, executed a timely and calculated ethical turn in order to participate in the period's popular reform genre in her critique of gambling, one of the 'reigning Vices of the Age', which as we shall see, also enabled her to articulate her progressive Whig politics.

Women writers were an integral part of the predominantly Whiggish post-Revolution theatre. They deftly positioned themselves in relation to the dominant discourse on moral reform, and forged useful connections within the close-knit theatrical community that enabled and supported their literary endeavours. The stage provided female playwrights with access to prominent Whig patrons, whose endorsement granted legitimacy to their work and financial support to their careers. There were also close connections between dramatic and poetic production within Whig culture. All the leading Whig patrons supported both drama and poetry. The prominent Whig dramatists, Nicholas Rowe and Colley Cibber, were rewarded by the Poet Laureateship for their contributions to the stage. Writers such as Centlivre published their poetry and plays together, capitalizing upon the publication of their drama to support the circulation of their poetry. Egerton, a poet and polemicist, drew upon her theatrical connections to promote her poetic endeavours. Trotter employed both the genres of drama and poetry to articulate her interest in Whig militarism and pay tribute to the Marlborough family.

The remaining chapters of this study comprise close readings of women's drama and poetry. As I demonstrate, Whig women writers were intensely concerned with the same ideological notions

[156] Centlivre, '*Mr.* Farquhar,' 363.
[157] Brian Corman, *Genre and Generic Change in English Comedy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 123.

and objectives that engaged their male contemporaries. Yet my reading also reveals these women writers' gendered negotiations of the dominant culture, and the ways in which they adapted and refashioned androcentric Whig themes and emphases. In the next two chapters of this thesis, I focus on Trotter's and Centlivre's contributions to Whig reforming discourse in the contemporary stage. My reading of Trotter's heroic tragedy, *The Revolution of Sweden* (1706), emphasizes her distinctive brand of female heroic virtue, which capitalizes on her persona as drama's leading female reformer to assert the virtues of courage and patriotism at a time of military conflict. The subsequent chapter on Centlivre's gaming plays explores her feminised configuration of Whig commercial virtue, which articulates the values of a commercial modernity, while underscoring the role and significance of women in the new credit economy.

# 2

## Heroic Virtue: Catharine Trotter's *The Revolution of Sweden* (1706)

*The Revolution of Sweden* (hereinafter *Revolution*) has been rightly identified as Trotter's 'most overt statement of her political position'.[1] The play marked Trotter's return to the stage after a hiatus of five years. After producing four dramas between 1695 and 1701, Trotter took a break from playwriting to publish a philosophical defence of John Locke in 1702 and a panegyric to Marlborough in 1705.[2] Her engagement with the contractarian theorist and the hero of the war on the continent significantly influenced the way she framed her politics when she produced her most politically-engaged and militant play.

*Revolution* was first staged on 11 February 1706, running for a respectable six nights at the new Queen's Theatre in Haymarket.[3] The play dramatizes the sixteenth-century war for Swedish independence from Danish rule, focusing on the final stages of the Swedish hero Gustavus' victorious struggle over the occupying Danes, which culminates in his election to the throne by the Swedish senate. Christina, Gustavus' erstwhile 'preserver', has abandoned her 'faithless husband', Beron, a Swede who had defected to the Danes, and she escapes in male disguise as Fredage.[4] Gustavus eventually triumphs over the Danish forces, but not before military skirmishes result in the female Swedish allies, Christina and Constantia, being captured by the enemy. This compels Arwide, Gustavus' key supporter, to impulsively abandon his command in an attempt to rescue his wife, Constantia. The drama focuses on the notion of public virtue 'tested' by the moral dilemma faced by its major characters including Christina, Constantia and Arwide. The lead role of Gustavus was played by Barton Booth (who would later take on the title role in Addison's *Cato*); the central

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[1] Kelley, *Trotter*, 137.

[2] See Trotter's *A Defence of the Essay of Human Understanding* [etc] (1702) and *A Poem on His Grace the Duke of Marlborough's return from his German expedition* (1705).

[3] See John Downes, *Roscius Anglicanus*, ed. Judith Milhous and Robert Hume (London: Society for Theatre Research, 1987), 102.

[4] Catharine Trotter, *The Revolution of Sweden*, ed. Gunnar Sorelius (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 2012), 23. Text references are to act, scene, and line of this edition.

heroine, Constantia, was acted by Elizabeth Barry; while the aging Thomas Betterton, then seventy years old, assumed the role of Arwide.

Critics have tended to view *Revolution* as the dramatic equivalent of Trotter's philosophical outlook, highlighting the play's emphasis on a Lockean contractarian ideology and radical proto-feminist claims of women's citizenship. Elizabeth Sund links the play's concerns with the themes of duty and citizenship to Trotter's philosophical works, which defend moral obligation and disinterested benevolence.[5] Gunnar Sorelius sees close connections between *Revolution*'s political sentiments and Locke's the *Two Treatises of Government*; however he largely overlooks the political agency of Trotter's female protagonists, dismissively concluding that 'Trotter was forced to introduce female characters […] something which the theatre-going public and the organization of the theatre companies equally required'.[6] Anne Kelley refutes this view, asserting the tragedy is Trotter's most emphatic statement of 'the power of female rationality'.[7] As Kelley contends: 'it is through the intervention of women that the power centre shifts from arbitrary tyranny to the rightful contract government'.[8] Brett Wilson situates the play within the context of 'new' post-Revolution dramatic themes, which focus on 'woman-centred and highly emotionalized theatrical development' as a means of 'articulating […] a new sense of political belonging'.[9]

*Revolution*, however, has rarely been considered within its immediate historical moment - a period of intense partisan politics, dominated by a crucial national event - the war on the continent. The play was performed at the height of the War of the Spanish Succession (1702-13), which also marked an escalating ideological struggle between Whig and Tory over the conduct and progress of the war. While Trotter's commitment to a Lockean notion of government has been widely noted, critics have rarely recognized Trotter's interest in the war and the implications of her Whig connections and sympathies on this drama, which clearly participates in Whiggish efforts to rouse patriotic fervour at a time of military conflict. My reading unpicks the partisan inflections of the

[5] Sund, 'Right to Resist,' 141.
[6] Sorelius, 'Libertarian drama,' 65.
[7] Kelley, *Trotter*, 137.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Wilson, *Patriots*, vii.

production of *Revolution*, situating the work within the context of the increasingly bitter political struggles over the ongoing war on the continent. The political valence of Trotter's play certainly lies with its affirmation of a contractarian polity, but its full import can only be appreciated in relation to her timely intervention in the partisan discourse on liberty, patriotism and heroism at a time of national threat. My focus is on Trotter's contribution to evolving Whig notions of heroic virtue; Trotter configures a Whiggish female public virtue, grounded in her understanding of women's wider role in promoting civic duty. I consider Trotter's play in relation to contemporary military drama by Trotter's Whiggish compatriots including Nicholas Rowe and John Dennis. My reading emphasizes Trotter's feminocentric concerns, and examines her complex religio-political position with regards to her Catholic faith, in order to bring out her distinctive and hence unusual brand of Whiggism. In the next section, I explore Trotter's engagement with Locke and his circle, before going on to consider the wider context of the war on the continent.

**Catharine Trotter and the Lockean circle**

Judging from her correspondence, Trotter was already working on *Revolution* in 1703, the year after the publication of her first philosophical work, *A Defence of the Essay of Human Understanding* (1702) (hereinafter *Defence*), which defends the moral epistemology of Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) (hereinafter *Essay*).[10] Trotter's *Defence* was a response to the vociferous criticism of Locke by Thomas Burnet, Master of the Charterhouse, who issued three replies to Locke's *Essay* between 1697 and 1699.[11] Trotter's initial foray into philosophical writing brought her the attention and praise of Locke; the Whig Latitudinarian bishop, Gilbert Burnet and his wife, Elizabeth; and other Whig figures in Locke's circle, including James Tyrell and John Toland. Just as Trotter's role in the Whiggish contemporary theatre enabled her to participate in Whig dramatic and patronage networks, her pro-Lockean philosophical work drew her into important Whig intellectual circles. Trotter sent a copy of her *Defence* to Elizabeth Burnet who

[10] See a letter from Congreve to Trotter of 1703, in which he comments on a draft manuscript of *Revolution*: Congreve to Catharine Trotter, 2 November 1703, in Congreve, *Letters*, 212.

[11] Thomas Burnet, *Remarks upon an Essay concerning Human Understanding* (London, 1697); this was followed by the *Second Remarks* in 1697 and the *Third Remarks* in 1699.

wrote back in thanks for the 'valuable present', conveying to Trotter that the Bishop and John Norris, the philosopher and Cambridge Platonist, were amongst the many admirers of her book.[12] In a letter to Locke, Elizabeth reveals she only had a 'little acquaintance' with Trotter at the time, having met her 'three or four times',[13] thanks to Trotter's earlier attempts to secure her mother's pension through the help of Bishop Burnet who mediated with Sarah Churchill, the Duchess of Marlborough.[14] Trotter was also a close friend and correspondent of Thomas Burnet of Kemway (not to be confused with Locke's antagonist), who was a cousin of the Bishop's.

Elizabeth appeared to have brought Trotter to Locke's notice soon after her receipt of the book, as a letter of June 1702 from Elizabeth to Locke testifies.[15] According to Birch, 'Mr *Locke* likewise was so highly satisfied with the *Defence* […] that being in London, he desired his cousin Mr. *King*, afterwards the Lord High Chancellor, to make Mrs. *Trotter* a visit, and a present of books'.[16] Locke also wrote a grateful letter to Trotter declaring that '[y]ou have herein not only vanquished my adversary, but reduced me also absolutely under your power'.[17] He praises the 'strength and clearness of [her] reasoning' and requests 'the greatest honour' of claiming her as his 'protectress'.[18] Locke's courteous hyperbole and the correspondence of other Whig figures including James Tyrell, the Whig theorist and a close friend of Locke's, testify to the warm contemporary reputation of Trotter's work. As Tyrell writes in a letter to Locke:

> I have read the Gentlewomans Defence of your Essay, etc against the cavalling Animadverter and am so well pleas'd with it, that I think none but yourself could have performed it better: which since you might think below you to undertake, yet I am very glad it is done, since I have heard some of our Academicks, speak of those letters as things too hard for you to answere, which false surmise is now sufficiently confuted.[19]

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[12] Elizabeth Burnet to Trotter, 19 June 1702, in Birch, 'Life,' xvii-xviii.
[13] Elizabeth Burnet to Locke, 20 June 1702, in Locke, *Correspondence*, 7:638.
[14] By contrast, Trotter's own account suggests a closer relationship; Trotter claims that Elizabeth, on learning that Trotter was writing a work that 'was not poetry', had induced her to reveal the subject of the work and later persuaded Trotter to publicly disclose her identity as the author of *Defence*. See Trotter to Thomas Burnet, 2 February 1704, in Trotter, *Works*, 2:166. Perhaps Elizabeth was eager to downplay her relationship with a Catholic playwright like Trotter.
[15] Elizabeth Burnet to Locke, 20 June 1702, in Locke, *Correspondence*, 7:638.
[16] Birch, 'Life,' xviii-xix.
[17] Locke to Catharine Trotter, 30 December 1702, in Locke, *Correspondence*, 7:731.
[18] Ibid.
[19] James Tyrell to Locke, 25 July 1703, in Locke, *Correspondence*, 8:44.

The controversial Whig deist, John Toland, author of *Christianity Not Mysterious* (1696), and another connection of Locke's, publicly commended Trotter's *Defence*, praising her as an 'absolute Mistress of the most abstracted Speculations in the Metaphysics, and who with an easy Turn of Stile and Argument has defended Mr. Lock's Essay of Human Understanding'.[20]

The fact that a Catholic like Trotter was lauded and patronized by members of the Whiggish Lockean circle was highly unusual. The correspondence of Elizabeth Burnet reveals that Trotter's identity as a Catholic and to some extent, a playwright, rendered her an ambiguous figure in Elizabeth's eyes. In explaining Trotter's background to Locke, Elizabeth wrote disparagingly about 'the fassion of her [Catholic] religion which allows great libertys, her stract circumstances, and being forced as it were to write plays, and consequently to contract Idle acquaintance, has left great blemishes on her reputation'.[21] Yet despite this unflattering account, Elizabeth took pains to extend financial help to Trotter and provide 'what good offices I can do her to resque [*sic*] her from any sort of defects I think charity allows'.[22] She urges Locke to do the same to alleviate Trotter's 'great poverty': 'if you please to order me to give her or send her your self 4: or 5: genies [*sic*] it will be a welcome charity; I have assisted her a little and believe you will forgive my freedom'.[23] Locke evidently took Elizabeth's advice, sending the sum of five guineas and a gift of books to Trotter, as testified by his letters to his cousin, Peter King.[24] Elizabeth Burnet was a Whig patroness, devotional writer and an intimate of the Whig grandee, the Duchess of Marlborough; despite her misgivings about Trotter's Catholic faith, Elizabeth undoubtedly valued Trotter's intellect and her public contributions to defending Locke's writings.[25] It is tempting to speculate that Trotter's admiration for Locke's religious philosophy and her relations with the Latitudinarian Burnets may have influenced her subsequent reconversion to the Anglican faith. That Trotter was increasingly drawn into the Burnet circle is evident in Bishop Burnet's public endorsement of her reconversion to Anglicanism in

[20] John Toland, preface to *Letters to Serena* (London, 1704).
[21] Elizabeth Burnet to Locke, 15 July 1702, in Locke, *Correspondence*, 7:650-1.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Elizabeth Burnet to Locke, 10 November 1702, in Locke, *Correspondence*, 7:702.
[24] See, Locke to Peter King, 25 November 1702, in Locke, *Correspondence*, 7:715.
[25] For Elizabeth Burnet's role as an active and ardent Whig, see Anne Kelley, "'Her Zeal for the Publick Good": The Political Agenda in Elizabeth Burnet's *A Method of Devotion* (1708),' *Women's Writing* 13, no. 3 (October 2006): 448-74.

1707, the year after *Revolution* was produced. Burnet guided Trotter's conversion and contributed the preface to her *A Discourse Concerning a Guide in Controversies* (1707) (hereinafter *Discourse*), which comprised a critique of Catholic doctrine and marked her return to the Anglican fold. Unsurprisingly, Trotter's former friend, the Tory Manley, publicly derides what she considers the hypocrisy of Trotter's reconversion, mocking Trotter in *The New Atalantis* as 'an Ornament to that Religion, which she had once before abandon'd and newly again profess'd'.[26]

Trotter's commitment to Locke's philosophy continued throughout her life. In a letter to Thomas Burnet, she writes movingly about being 'sensibly touched' by Locke's death in October 1704, giving Burnet a detailed account of Locke's last hours with Damaris Masham, Locke's intimate friend, who was also a close acquaintance of Trotter.[27] Twenty-two years after Locke's death, Trotter published another defence of the late philosopher – *A Letter to Dr Holdsworth* (1726) – which responds to allegations of heresy in a sermon preached by Winch Holdsworth. This was followed by Trotter's *A Vindication of Mr Locke's Christian Principles*, which was published posthumously in a collection of her works edited by Thomas Birch.[28] Although Trotter's public defences of Locke concentrated on his moral philosophy, her commentary in the *Gentleman's Magazine* published in 1737 explicitly upholds a Lockean notion of contractual government: 'all the governments, that are, or have been in the world […] must be maintained either by the express or tacit consent of the people'.[29] Trotter's support for Locke's contractarian politics is given its fullest dramatic expression in her play, *Revolution*, which serves as a Whiggish paean to liberty at a time of military conflict. In the next section, I examine Trotter's *Revolution* in the context of the crucial national event of the decade: the war on the continent.

[26] Manley, *Works*, 2:185.
[27] Trotter to Thomas Burnet, 19 February 1705, in Trotter, *Works*, 2:189. For Trotter's account of her friendship with Damaris Masham, see Trotter to Thomas Burnet, 10 September 1708, in Trotter, *Works*, 2:205-7.
[28] Trotter, *Works*.
[29] See Trotter, *Works*, 2:142.

### *The Revolution of Sweden* and the War of the Spanish Succession (1702-13)

Trotter's heroic play, *Revolution*, was performed at the height of the war on the continent, eighteen months after Marlborough's celebrated victory at Blenheim in August 1704. When the play was staged in February 1706, the Duke was on the continent preparing for the season's campaign, which would culminate in another resounding triumph in the battle of Ramillies of May 1706. The term 'Revolution' in the drama's title is suggestive of its partisan aims – a pointed signal to the Glorious Revolution, and the Revolution Principles upon which Whig political commitments are based. Trotter's retelling of the Swedes' successful sixteenth-century revolt against their Danish oppressors is suggestive of the struggles and achievements of the Revolution of 1688, serving as a patriotic reminder to a nation at war of the crucial need to strive for political liberty.

As discussed, Britain's role in the continental war was of crucial importance to the Whig interest for a number of reasons, not least to safeguard the Protestant Hanoverian succession and Britain's continued existence as a Protestant state, which were endangered by Louis XIV's recognition of the Catholic Stuart Pretender's claims to the throne. The war on the continent can be seen as a continuation of the struggles of the Revolution against the perceived threats of Catholicism and arbitrary power, and victory was deemed necessary to secure the constitutional and religio-political achievements of the Revolutionary Settlement. John Dennis explains the 'great Cause' of the continental war as a battle 'for Justice, Liberty, Religion, God'.[30] This is not to say that the war was a strictly Whiggish endeavour. War was a bi-partisan effort; the Tories too recognized the need to contain France's continental ambitions and they supported the war and participated in the national patriotic fervour at least in the early years of the conflict. However, the Tories were more isolationist, and favoured a 'blue-water' policy emphasizing maritime action rather than the costly continental operations centred in Flanders that were promoted by Marlborough, the Captain-General of the army, and the Whigs. As the Tory Lord Nottingham asserts: 'we shall never have any decisive success nor be able to hold out a war against France but by making it a sea War, and such a sea

[30] John Dennis, *Britannia Triumphans* [etc] (London, 1704), 3.

War as accompanies and supports attempts on land'.[31] The Tories attempted to diminish Marlborough's triumph at Blenheim of August 1704, by setting up Admiral George Rooke and the navy's successes in Gibraltar and Malaga as equally laudable victories.[32] At the same time the intimate connection between religion and politics of the era meant that the Tory-High Church alliance over the issues of toleration and dissent was at times associated with attempts to frustrate the war efforts. For example, the notorious 'Tack' of November 1704, driven by High Tories, was an attempt to tack an occasional conformity clause on to the Land Tax Bill for the year, in effect declaring that the Tories were willing to refuse to grant the necessary funding for the war if their demands regarding the Church were not met.[33]

As the war on the continent progressed, the leaders of Anne's war government, Marlborough and Sidney Godolphin, became increasingly estranged from the Tories and were compelled to work with the Whigs in order to secure support for the funding and progress of the war. Marlborough in particular had become a cult hero for the Whigs after his triumphant campaign at Blenheim – a deliverer of the nation from France's Catholic forces on the continent whose victories endorsed the Whigs' political strategies and aims.[34] As Loftis points out, while enthusiasm for the war leaders, Marlborough and Godolphin, was widespread in almost all quarters in the early years of Anne's reign, the years 1704-5 witnessed the beginning of the 'High Tory vendetta against Marlborough' and publicly expressed support for the two men and the war increasingly implied Whiggish allegiances.[35]

In this light, Trotter's dedication of her play to a key member of the Marlborough circle holds suggestively partisan inflections. *Revolution* is dedicated to Lady Henrietta Godolphin, daughter and heir of the Duke of Marlborough. The dedication reveals Trotter's strong support for the conduct of the war and her Whiggish public endorsement of members of the Marlborough circle:

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[31] Nottingham to Marlborough, 2 April 1703, in *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series. Of the Reign of Anne* (London, 1916), 1:671.
[32] See George Macaulay Trevelyan, *England Under Queen Anne* (London: Longmans, Green, 1930-4), 1:420.
[33] See Barry Coward, *The Stuart Age: A History of England 1603-1714* (London: Longman, 1980), 423.
[34] See Williams, *Literary Culture*, 139-40.
[35] Loftis, *Politics*, 39. For a detailed examination of High Tory opposition to Marlborough from 1704 onwards, see Trevelyan, *England*, 1:418-23.

> Nor is Poetry, *Madam*, unworthy the Protection of the Wise, and the Good, […] it has been cherish'd as an Instrument of Virtue, in the Politest, and best govern'd Commonwealths […] At least it must be own'd very Advantageous in a Nation where Publick Diversions are allow'd, and frequented, to contrive that our Pleasures shou'd be useful to our Morals, serve to correct our Vices, and animate the Mind to Virtue […] and the particular Virtue it tends to incite, being a disinterested and resolute Care of the Publick Good, where could it be more properly addressed, than to a Lady, the Happy and Worthy Cement of two Families, whose Station gives them the highest Opportunities of being those Blessings to the Publick, they are so admirably qualify'd for? All *Europe* look on the English Forces, whilst under the Conduct of the Duke of *Marlborough*, as the Guardians of their Liberty: And we have a late Proof in the Peoples Readiness to advance the Supplies for maintaining the War.[36]

The first part of this passage articulates Trotter's customary privileging of virtue. In her assumed role as a stage reformer concerned with drama's moral purpose, Trotter posits art as 'an Instrument of Virtue' which serves to 'correct' human vices and 'animate the Mind to Virtue'. Virtue is conceived as the wider notion of public virtue or the 'resolute Care of the Publick Good'. Trotter's adoption of the role of a reformist concerned with civic virtue can be seen as a source of moral and literary authority to comment on the patriotic duty of a citizen at a time of national threat. Publicly staking her affiliations to the presiding war government, Trotter underscores Henrietta's status as a member of the two governing political families: 'the Happy and Worthy Cement of two Families'. Henrietta was married to a son of Lord Godolphin, the Lord High Treasurer, who along with her father, the Duke, formed the war government partnership known as the duumvirate. While Trotter's selection of a female dedicatee is suggestive of her feminocentric concerns, her choice of patroness also burnishes her Whiggish credentials in her alignment with the Marlborough-Godolphin camp. Just two months prior to the production of *Revolution*, Trotter published an effusive panegyric to the Duke celebrating his remarkable victory at Blenheim: *A Poem on His Grace the Duke of Marlborough's return from his German expedition* (1705). In the dedication of her play, Trotter similarly pays tribute to the Duke and 'the English Forces' as national heroes and 'Guardians of their Liberty'. In view of Tory opposition to the war's continental operations on the grounds of its massive expenditure, Trotter assumes a suggestively partisan Whig position when she commends Godolphin's

[36] Trotter, epistle dedicatory.

management of the Treasury: 'And we have a late Proof in the Peoples Readiness to advance the Supplies for maintaining the War, how entirely they are satisfied with the management of our Treasure […] which nothing less than the exact Prudence, and the clearest Integrity, can pass through irreproachably'.[37]

Trotter emphasizes her links to the Churchill family by praising an unspecified 'Honour [that] was publickly done me by the Dutchess of *Marlborough*, and all her Beauteous family' – a likely reference to the attendance of the Marlboroughs at one of her play's performances.[38] Sarah Churchill, the Duchess of Marlborough, was a notoriously ardent Whig, who was despised by the Tories for her close relations with and influence on Queen Anne. Trotter's warm praise of the Duchess and her progeny can be seen as a public signal of alignment at a time when Sarah Churchill had become the focus of Tory resentment toward the Junto and Whiggery in general.[39] Trotter's affiliation with the Marlboroughs was underpinned by her connections through her family and friends; Trotter's brother-in-law, Dr Inglis, served on the Duke's staff as the army's physician general, and Trotter's patron and close confidant, Lady Sarah Piers, was married to 'an officer of considerable rank under the duke of Marlborough'.[40] A number of Trotter's letters testify to the regular interaction between the Duke and Trotter's circle of family and friends, an issue I will explore in greater detail in my section on Trotter's war panegyrics.[41]

A pointed signal of Trotter's interest in the war and her desire to promote a Whiggish patriotism is the inclusion in her dedication of quotations from Joseph Addison's *The Campaign* (1705), an acclaimed example of the Whig sublime which celebrates Marlborough's glorious victory at Blenheim: 'On the Firm Basis of Desert, they rise,/ From long try'd Faith, and Friendship holy Ties'.[42] Trotter adopts these two lines from Addison's famous poem to laud the duumvirate,

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[37] Ibid.

[38] In a letter to Sarah Churchill, Elizabeth Burnet recommends a book written by Trotter whom she describes to the Duchess as 'one who is turned protestant [and] once writ a play your Grace saw'; Elizabeth Burnet to Sarah Churchill, May 1707, Blenheim Papers, MS Add. 61458, f. 62v, British Library, London.

[39] For more details, see p.188.

[40] Birch, 'Life', x.

[41] See pp.186-9.

[42] Trotter, epistle dedicatory. For a fuller analysis of Trotter's engagement with Addison's poem, see pp.189-91.

Marlborough and Godolphin. Addison, of course was a leading Whig writer, ideologue and official. Trotter modestly compares herself to this celebrated panegyrist of the Duke: 'an Author, who cou'd so much better do Justice to your Ladyships Family, and Character which I dare only venture Superficially to touch'.[43] Behind the customary feminine self-abasement, however, Trotter's invocation of Addison declares her alignment to mainstream Whig literary circles; she strategically positions herself in relation to the leading Whig panegyrist in an attempt to appropriate the authority of patriotic male poets and assert her legitimacy to comment on the dominant tropes of war and patriotism.

The political valence of Trotter's play is also grounded in her choice of source material which centres on the historical personage of Gustavus I Vasa, a figure loaded with partisan meaning. *Revolution* dramatizes the story of the sixteenth-century Swedish patriot, Gustavus Vasa, who led a successful revolt against the Danish oppressors and was elected king through the choice of his people. Trotter's main source for the play is Abbé Vertot's *Histoires des revolutions de Suide* (1695); its highly popular English version was translated by John Mitchel in 1696 as *The History of the Revolutions in Sweden* (1696), reaching three editions by the time Trotter's *Revolution* was composed and six English editions by 1723. The book's popularity and its appeal to Trotter as a source was probably due to its parallels with Britain's recent political upheavals, in the suggestive resemblance between the Swedish revolution which brought down the Danes' tyrannical rule and the Glorious Revolution of 1688. As Trotter explains in the preface to *Revolution*, she focuses the 'one great Action' of the play on 'the Election of *Gustavus* to the Throne, upon the entire Deliverance of his country'.[44] Trotter's employment of a post-Revolution Whig idiom underscores her political commitments. The terms 'deliverance' and 'election' originate from a Whiggish vocabulary dating back to the Glorious Revolution, referring to William's 'deliverance' of the nation from the perceived tyranny and absolutism of James II's Catholic rule, as well as parliament's 'election' of William and Mary to the throne through the Bill of Rights of 1689. Yet these Revolutionary themes also have a

[43] Trotter, epistle dedicatory.
[44] Catharine Trotter, preface to *Revolution*, 10.

contemporary resonance. Trotter's description of Sweden's struggle for independence is evocative of the experience of contemporary Britain embroiled in military conflict on the continent and bitterly partisan internal squabbles: 'Sweden's liberty is in debate,/ Concludes amidst the war, and cares of state'.[45]

The Whiggish inflections of Trotter's source material would have been recognizable to her audience. The same post-Revolution rhetoric was used in contemporary associations of Gustavus with the Whig ideal of the constitutional monarch and warrior-king: William III. The preface to Mitchel's translation praises Gustavus on unmistakably similar terms to post-Revolution Williamite propaganda, in which William was lauded as a Protestant saviour and deliverer of the British nation.[46] Mitchel explicitly compares the Swedish patriot with the British King: Gustavus is 'that Great Prince, who may justly be stil'd the Deliverer of the Swedish Nation, the Establisher of the Reform'd Religion, and the Restorer […] of the Monarchy of that Kingdom', while William is the 'Hero, whose matchless Bravery and inimitable Vertues darken the Fainter Glory of Gustavus's Reign'.[47] Mitchel's account of Gustavus' heroic opposition to Danish tyranny, which results in the 'Flight and Abdication' of the Danish King and the securing of the 'Reform'd Religion', clearly invokes Whiggish conceptions of William's role in the Glorious Revolution.[48] As Niall Mackenzie has shown, the figure of Gustavus, the sixteenth-century deliverer of the Swedish nation, was viewed as a forerunner of William III, and the idea of Gustavus as an anti-Catholic, anti-absolutist Whig icon was firmly entrenched in British culture of the time.[49] The analogy with William was particularly potent in the year that Mitchel's translation was first published in 1696, the year of the Assassination Plot when the revelation of this conspiracy helped bolster the King's waning popularity. By the time *Revolution* was performed ten years later, the figure of Gustavus, the Protestant patriot, can be seen as a symbol of resistance to foreign tyranny, an effective source of identification for the British who were battling against French

[45] Trotter, prologue to *Revolution*, 13.
[46] For Whiggish configurations of William as the nation's 'deliverer' and 'liberator', see Williams, *Literary Culture*, 93-134.
[47] John Mitchel, translator's preface to *The History of the Revolutions in Sweden*, by Abbé Vertot (London, 1696).
[48] Ibid.
[49] Niall Mackenzie, 'Some British Writers and Gustavus Vasa,' *Studia Neophilologica* 78, no. 1 (June 2006): 64-65.

Catholic forces on the continent.[50] The association of Sweden with the cause of British liberty was particularly acute at this stage of the war, when the country still harboured hopes that the Swedish king, Charles XII, could be persuaded to ally with Britain against France.[51]

Trotter's interest in the reinvigorated debate on liberty and patriotism at a time of military threat was shared by other Whig playwrights. In his characteristically explicit manner, John Dennis explains in the preface to his *Liberty Asserted* that 'the Design of this Tragedy is to make Men in Love with Liberty', and to inculcate 'publick Spirit' for an uncompromising resistance to French tyranny.[52] Dennis warns that 'the Liberties of Europe, and of this Island particularly, are in no small Danger at present from the growing Power of France'.[53] As does Trotter's *Revolution*, Dennis' paean to liberty affirms a contractarian mode of government; his tragedy, he explains, is a dramatic equivalent of the political philosophy espoused by 'Mr Lock'.[54] Dennis' later play, *Appius and Virginia* (1709), dedicated to Lord Godolphin at a time when the latter was facing intense attacks from the Tories, registers a similar opposition to tyranny and espousal of political liberty, in its dramatization of 'Livy's famous story of private resistance to public tyranny'.[55] Dennis' Whiggish interest in the war is articulated in the play's dedication which commends Godolphin for the war efforts and 'the wonderful change to a State of Conquest and Glory'.[56] Nicholas Rowe's *Tamerlane*, performed at the end of 1701, at the onset of war and whilst William still reigned, is a jingoistic call to arms and an allegory of William's military struggle against Louis XIV: 'The Hero rouz'd, asserts the Glorious Cause,/ And to the Field the cheerful Soldier draws'.[57] More ambiguous in its politics and reception, Addison's *Cato* (1713)[58] – most of which was composed in the early years of the century,[59] although the play was

[50] See Margaret Omberg, 'Gustavus Vasa and the Myth of the Mines,' *Studia Neophilologica* 67, no. 1 (January 1995): 36.
[51] Not only did Sweden eschew joining the Grand Alliance of the continental war, in the early years of the Hanoverian era, Charles XII of Sweden became an ally of the Stuart Pretender and was involved with an aborted Jacobite attempt to invade Britain in 1717. See p.267.
[52] John Dennis, preface to *Liberty Asserted.*
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Loftis, *Politics*, 43.
[56] John Dennis, dedication of *Appius and Virginia* (London, 1709).
[57] Nicholas Rowe, prologue to *Tamerlane* in *Plays*, 161.
[58] *Cato* was a controversial political play, with both parties, Tory and Whig, claiming that the drama expressed their own partisan positions. See David Walker, 'Addison's Cato and the Transformation of Republican Discourse in the Early Eighteenth Century,' *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 26, no. 1 (2003): 91-108.

not performed until a decade later – was possibly the most 'dramatic celebration of political liberty in Anne's reign'.[60]

But while Trotter's *Revolution* espouses the same Whiggish themes of liberty and patriotism predicated on the basis of constitutional monarchy, she departs from her male contemporaries in her feminocentric emphases and concerns. Trotter's dramatization of liberty privileges the agency of female patriots whose heroism and civic virtues enable the cause of liberty and a constitutional polity. Furthermore, the play's affirmation of Revolution Principles interrogates Whig notions of resistance in both the state and the family. Trotter's shift to a more female-centred version of the tale of Gustavus Vasa is registered in her selective revisions to Vertot's original. Whilst *Revolution* follows the historical events depicted in Vertot fairly closely, Trotter's major revisions concern her two female protagonists: Trotter significantly enhances the role and noble attributes of Christina, a patriot who defies her husband to preserve Gustavus' life, and creates the new character of Constantia, a courageous and upright Swedish noblewoman married to Arwide, Gustavus' key supporter and friend.[61] The name 'Constantia' is a recurring motif in Trotter's life and work. Constantia was also the name of a major female protagonist in Trotter's debut play, *Agnes de Castro*. After the production of *Revolution*, Trotter appeared to be personally invested in the character of Constantia, the virtuous female patriot of the play, as suggested by the use of 'Constantia' as Trotter's own pseudonym in her letters to Patrick Cockburn, whom she married in 1708 and to whom she refers by the name of the loyal husband in *Revolution* as 'Arwide'.[62] In another material revision to Vertot's original, Trotter eschews his suggestion of love as a motivating factor in Christina's rescue of Gustavus.[63] This drew some criticism from Congreve, to whom Trotter sent a draft manuscript of the play in 1703. As Congreve advises in a letter to Trotter:

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[59] Addison had likely composed most of the first four acts of *Cato* by 1704; see Loftis, *Politics,* 38.
[60] Ibid., 44.
[61] The role of Christina derives from Vertot's account of a Mrs Peterson who saved Gustavus' life when her husband attempted to betray him to the Danes; see Vertot, 'A Table of the Principal Matters,' in *Revolutions*.
[62] See for example, Trotter to Thomas Cockburn, 3 June 1707, in Trotter, *Works*, 2:212-7.
[63] Vertot suggests that Mrs Peterson's assistance to Gustavus was 'prompted by Pity, and […] tender Passion'; Vertot, *Revolutions*, 123.

> You are the best judge, whether those of your own sex will approve as much of the heroic virtue of Constantia and Christina, as if they had been engaged in some *belle passion* […] for [Christina] you may easily drop a word, to intimate her delivering of *Gustavus* to have proceeded from some spark of love, which afterwards she may repent of, and her character remain as perfect as nature require.[64]

Trotter's literary mentor may have been right in questioning whether the audience would appreciate the presentation of Constantia and Christina as heroic figures rather than ones conventionally engaged in acts of tender passion. However, withholding love as a motivating factor enables Trotter to focus solely on the nobility and selflessness of Christina's actions, depicted as purely underpinned by duty and moral obligation to the nation – values which are crucial to Trotter's conception of feminine civic virtue.

### *The Revolution of Sweden* and Nicholas Rowe's *Tamerlane* (1701)

To illuminate Trotter's feminocentric configuration of heroic virtue, my reading adopts a close comparison between Trotter's *Revolution* and Rowe's *Tamerlane*, one of the period's most popular military heroic plays and 'a formidable missive in the campaign to promote Britain's intervention on the Continent in the War of the Spanish Succession'.[65] After its debut in 1701, *Tamerlane* was produced intermittently until 1710 when it disappeared from the London stage between 1710 and 1714, an interval when the Tories held political sway, only to return as a popular stock play and Whig party piece during the years 1715-48.[66] Although we have no evidence of any personal relations between Trotter and Rowe, they were both active players in the small and close-knit London theatrical scene and must have at least been known to each other. They had a mutual connection in Centlivre, who was a close friend of Rowe's. Other mutual connections between Trotter and Rowe included Congreve and the Whig writer, John Hughes. Judging from Birch's account of her life, Trotter was a regular theatregoer at the time, and it is possible that she attended Rowe's production

[64] Congreve to Catharine Trotter, 2 November 1703, in Congreve, *Letters*, 212.
[65] Paulina Kewes, '"The State is out of Tune": Nicholas Rowe's *Jane Shore* and the Succession Crisis of 1713-14,' *Huntington Library Quarterly* 64, no. 3/4 (January 2001): 284.
[66] See Loftis, *Politics*, 34.

or at least read its published version.[67] Certainly the year 1701, during which *Tamerlane* was produced, was one in which Trotter was very much immersed in the London theatrical industry, publishing her sole comedy, *Love at a Loss*, in 1701 and producing the tragedy, *The Unhappy Penitent*, in February 1701. *Revolution* and *Tamerlane* share a number of similarities. Both belong to the genre of the heroic play as popularized by Dryden in *The Conquest of Granada* (1670). They are set in exotic far-flung locations and are concerned with conflicts and war, aristocratic and royal personages; in both the notion of heroic virtue is held up for audience admiration. Both dramas are intensely militaristic, and emphasize a Whig constitutional position in their assertion of a contractarian mode of government. Just as Trotter's main protagonist, Gustavus Vasa, is an analogue of William, the virtuous hero of Rowe's play, Tamerlane, is explicitly associated with the late King. As Rowe confirms: '[t]here are many Features, 'tis true, in [Tamerlane's] Life, not unlike His Majesty: His Courage, his Piety […] his Hate of Tyranny and Oppression, and his zealous Care for the common Good of Mankind'.[68] Richard Steele makes the pointed observation that 'Great William is in Tamerlane display'd'.[69] *Revolution* and *Tamerlane* contribute to evolving Whig conceptions of heroism and civic duty – a crucial component of the ongoing partisan battle for the ownership of 'virtue' at a time of military conflict. Yet Trotter's play refashions Rowe's Whiggish configuration of a virtuous patriot-hero through shifting dramatic attention to her female agents.

*Revolution* begins with a scene in Gustavus' camp in which the Swedish lieutenant, Enrici, attempts to dissuade his soldiers from abandoning the war efforts to return home for the harvest. Their exchange sets the scene for the state of tyranny and oppression in Sweden. As Enrici reminds his men, the 'invading Danes' (I.i.25) and their 'faithless king' (I.i.30) have wreaked havoc and 'unparalleled barbarities' (I.i.37) on Sweden. The country is depicted as a polity in distress: a place where 'murders, rapes and rapines' (I.i.36) are 'daily' (I.i.38) occurrences throughout all of Sweden's

[67] For example, George Farquhar wrote to Trotter to thank her for attending the third night of his *Love and a Bottle* (1698); George Farquhar to C. Cockburn, *c.* 1699, Cockburn Papers.
[68] Nicholas Rowe, dedication of *Tamerlane* in *Plays*, 159.
[69] Richard Steele, prologue to a revival of *Tamerlane at* Newcome's School, Hackney, c 1722 in *The Prologues and Epilogues of the Eighteenth Century*, vol. 3, part 2, *1721-1737,* ed. Pierre Danchin (Nancy: Presses Universitaires De Nancy, 1990), 83.

provinces. The Danish monarch, King Christien, is an arbitrary ruler with no regard for contracts, laws or treatises, which are '[n]o sooner made than broke' (I.i.31). The Danes are cruel, treacherous and inhumane; an invitation to an ostensible coronation feast, as Enrici reminds his men, ended with the massacre of all worthy citizens of Stockholm, '[b]utchered by the inhuman king's command' (I.i.35). As Susan Owen has shown, the depiction of figures of absolutist, arbitrary power as cruel, treacherous and faithless is a characteristically Whiggish move in plays of the Exclusion era.[70] Yet Trotter's employment of these motifs has a contemporary resonance: the Danish king's reneging of treaties is suggestive of Louis XIV's contravention of the Treaty of Ryswick of 1697, while the distressing picture of the foreign occupation of Sweden is a salutary reminder of the expansionary threat of absolutist France and their potential 'vassal', the Stuart Pretender.[71] While the Swedish massacre is based on the historical event of the 'Stockholm Bloodbath' of 1520, it can also be seen as a warning to a Britain embroiled in an ongoing war of the consequences of parlaying with a faithless enemy.

Enrici's moving account of the oppression of his native land inspires the group of soldiers who respond with rousing cries of 'Liberty, liberty' (I.i.44). It is important to note that the assembled soldiers, most of whom comprise the peasantry, are depicted as rational, reasonable men, not the unruly rebellious mob of late seventeenth-century Tory drama.[72] Gustavus appears in the scene to intervene and generously allow his men to return to their home and harvest. His speech and his soldiers' response effectively dramatize a specifically Lockean relationship between a governor and the governed. As Gustavus chides Enrici: 'these who give their voluntary service/ To the common cause, should be allowed/ Their share in nature's bounty' (I.i.76-78). The soldiers thank Gustavus for his generosity and vow to return to defend their country as soon as the harvest is over. They voluntarily leave six hundred 'stout Dalecarlians' (I.i.95) to protect Gustavus and the city of Uppsala until their return. The key term here is 'volunteer' – Gustavus' relationship with his followers suggests

[70] Owen, *Restoration Drama*, 239-74.
[71] Louis' recognition of the Stuart Pretender's claims to the throne in September 1701 is in direct contravention of the clauses of the Treaty of Ryswick, in which France recognized William's legitimate right to the British throne; Coward, *Stuart Age*, 403.
[72] See Owen, *Restoration Drama*, 254.

a contractarian notion of government, in which sovereignty is predicated on the consent of the people. Significantly, Vertot's original had shown Gustavus reserving the six hundred men for his use, whilst Trotter revises this to show that the men chose to stay out of their own volition, emphasizing the consensual nature of the political relationship between a leader and his people, as well as the care and affection that the people have for Gustavus.[73] His explanation for releasing his men not only reveals Gustavus' generosity and benevolence but an acute awareness of the bounds of constitutional sovereignty:

> [we] ought
> To be most careful that the means we use
> Be strictly just and pious as our cause:
> Supressing tyranny's an ill pretext
> For our becoming tyrants. (I.i.142-7)

As Locke contends in the *Two Treatises of Government* (1689) (hereinafter the *Two Treatises*): the 'utmost Bounds' of a government's authority is '*limited to the publick good of* the Society. It is a Power, that hath no other end but preservation, and therefor can never have a right to destroy, enslave, or designedly to impoverish the Subjects'.[74] Gustavus' speech and actions are clearly informed by this principle; although the Swedish rebellion against their Danish oppressors is justified by the latter's tyrannical rule, the 'means' by which Gustavus achieves his goal is limited by the constitutional bounds of his authority, eschewing any actions that would deprive the people of their liberty and property, including the soldiers' right to a 'share in nature's bounty' (I.i.78). But while the Lockean inflections of Trotter's drama have been widely recognized, what has not been noted is her response to an emergent Whig notion of heroism centred on the figure of the virtuous warrior-prince.[75] As I will show, Trotter's depiction of Gustavus as a just constitutional governor is part of the portrayal of this Whiggish ideal. John Richardson has drawn attention to the marked shift in literary representations of military heroes from 1701 onwards, in which war leaders were conceived as

[73] See Vertot, *Revolutions*, 146. Trotter's revision was noted by Sorelius; Sorelius, introduction, xxii.
[74] John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett, student ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 357. Subsequent references appear parenthetically in the text by book and page number.
[75] For the contractarian elements of Trotter's play, see Sund, 'Right to Resist'; and Sorelius, 'Libertarian drama'.

'highly virtuous men as well as brave fighters and gifted generals'.[76] As he points out, dramatists such as Rowe adapted seventeenth-century dramatic tradition 'to create a conqueror more virtuous and peace-loving than those portrayed by earlier playwrights'.[77]

In *Revolution*, the figure of Gustavus embodies all the virtues of an ideal Whig hero: martial valour, mercy, generosity, moderation, and the conviction that sovereignty is based on the people's consent. Gustavus rules through the consent and affection of his people – 'this affection of my people,/ Is dearer to me […] Great as it is and glorious' (V.ii.71-73) – in sharp contrast to his protagonist, the tyrannical Danish King whose 'cruelty,/ Injustice and oppressions' (I.i.162-3) have rendered him 'hateful to his subjects' (I.i.162). Gustavus fulfils the Whiggish heroic ideal of combining martial heroism and civic duty; he is a valiant warrior who in repelling a surprise attack by the Archbishop's forces 'almost alone sustained the fury/ Of the enemy' (II.i.14-15). Yet as he makes explicit, war is a necessity only for the public good: a 'fight for justice, for the laws, the rights/ And privileges of our nation' (I.i.142-3). Gustavus is an exemplary martial leader who confronts a hostile enemy 'with fire and sword' (IV.i.27) but unlike the heroic protagonists of Restoration drama who glory in warfare, he avoids bloodshed whenever possible.[78] Gustavus is merciful, measured and opts for diplomacy when circumstances permit, as when he allows negotiations with the Danish representatives to proceed. As he explains to his supporters, neutralizing an enemy into a friend and thus saving countless lives is a greater achievement than 'the most glorious battle':

> Yet we may purchase it at the expense
> Of many lives, which I would save on any
> Composition; nor would destroy one enemy
> Whom I could make a friend; a victory
> More noble far, than the most glorious battle. (I.i.218-22)

Gustavus conforms to the tenets of monarchical ideals and portraits of 'the virtuous warrior' popularized by propagandist Whig literature of the period. In his influential pamphlet published at the end of William's reign, Richard Steele's *The Christian Hero* (1701) asserts humane qualities as

[76] John Richardson, 'Nicholas Rowe's *Tamerlane* and the Martial Ideal,' *Modern Language Quarterly* 69, no. 2 (June 2008): 272.
[77] Ibid.
[78] For an account of heroes of Restoration heroic drama who delight in warfare, see Richardson, '*Tamerlane*,' 277-9.

values imperative for a leader, including the Christian virtue of meekness or temperance: 'that Sublime and Heroick Virtue, Meekness, a Virtue which seems the very Characteristick of a Christian, and arises from a great, not a grovelling idea of things'.[79] Steele denounces classical heroes as wanting in Christian virtues – including the 'eminent Heathen[s]' (p.16), Caesar and Cato – a sentiment Trotter would also articulate in her panegyrics to Marlborough.[80] In an explicit comparison between the 'two great Rivals' (p.82) of the age, William and his antagonist, Louis XIV, Steele brings out the virtues of the ideal warrior-prince. A 'glorious Captain' (p.87) is one who governs his subjects based on 'their rational and voluntary Obedience' (p.83); he is acutely aware that 'the Cause and Foundation' (p.83) of power is to 'relieve the Oppressed' (p.83) and 'cherish and protect' (p.83) the people. This model of heroic kingship excels in international diplomacy and not territorial aggression: '[h]e rules the World not by an Invasion of the People of the Earth, but the Address of its Princes' (p.87). Steele completes the portrait with an extended description of this kingly ideal, which plays on Tory notions of absolute monarchy and hereditary right:

> Independent either of Applause or Calumny, which renders him if not in a Political, yet in a Moral, a Philosophick, an Heroick, and a Christian Sense an absolute Monarch […] A Prince who from a just Notion of his Duty […] has in the service of his Fellow-Creatures, a noble contempt of Pleasures, and patience of Labours, to whom 'tis Hereditary to be the Guardian and Asserter of the Native Rights and Liberties of Mankind, and who with a rational Ambition, knows how much greater 'tis to give than take away; whose every Day is productive of some great Action, in behalf of Mens Universal Liberty. (pp.86-88)

Yet notwithstanding his emphasis on Christian temperance, Steele concludes with a jingoistic pledge to defend king and country, suggestive of the military context within which his work is produced: 'we will with endless Adoration implore Heav'n to continue him to us, or expire in Heaps before his Pavillion, to guard his important Life, and in the Joint Cause of Heav'n and Earth, our Religion and our Liberty, destroy like Ministring Angels, or die an Army of Martyrs' (p.88). In the genre of drama, the Whiggish ideal of heroic virtue is given its fullest articulation in the central protagonist of Rowe's

[79] Richard Steele, *The Christian Hero*, ed. Rae Blanchard (London; Humphrey Milford: Oxford University Press, 1932), 51. Subsequent references are to this edition.
[80] See p.197.

*Tamerlane*, which I will explore further in a comparison between Trotter's and Rowe's heroic plays.

The dedication of Rowe's drama pays tribute to Tamerlane's virtues in familiar Whiggish terms: 'his Fatherly Love of his People, but above all, his Hate of Tyranny and Oppression, and his zealous Care for the Common Good of Mankind'.[81] Tamerlane is praised for his 'Courage, his Piety, his Moderation, his Justice', terms that are echoed in Trotter's play in which Gustavus is hailed by his people for 'his moderation,/ Justice, and piety' (I.ii.63-64).[82] Rowe portrays Tamerlane as an ideal constitutional monarch who governs based on the consent of his people, a role contemptuously dismissed by his antagonist, the tyrant Bajazet, as ruling by 'debating Senates/ [who] Shar'd a precarious Scepter'.[83] Bajazet is the antithesis of Tamerlane, embodying the attributes of the tyrannical absolutist monarch that we have seen displayed in Trotter's villain, the Danish King. Bajazet is a treacherous arbitrary ruler and violator of treatises, whose territorial ambitions have driven him to carve out neighbouring sovereign lands. By contrast, Tamerlane is a virtuous contractarian monarch, acutely aware that his authority is based on the consent of his people and for the sole objective of public good. As Tamerlane asserts:

> Be it, to have been Heaven's happy Instrument,
> The means of Good to all my Fellow-Creatures;
> This is a King's best Praise. (II.ii.34-36)

Tamerlane's function as a constitutional monarch striving for public good is combined with an allusion to his role as an 'Instrument' of divine providence. In a recent reading, Rebecca Bullard and John McTague point to the references to providence in *Tamerlane* and the 'sense of inevitability' that they create as suggestive that Rowe's Whiggish allegiance is more ambiguous than had been previously believed.[84] But as discussed in the previous chapter, the imaging of William of Orange as a providential Protestant saviour who 'rescues' the beleaguered nation through God's will, is one of the many Whiggish propagandist stances used to defend the Revolution. *The Christian Hero*,

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[81] Rowe, dedication, 159.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Rowe, *Plays*, 182. Subsequent text references are to act, scene and line of this edition.
[84] Rebecca Bullard and John McTague, introduction to *The Ambitious Step-mother, Tamerlane,* and *The Fair Penitent* in Rowe, *Plays*, 43.

Steele's influential Whig tract, also includes a description of William as 'that Glorious Instrument of Providence' (p.93). Thus Rowe's implication that Tamerlane's (and William's) role is approved by heaven does not mean that he rules according to the absolutist tenets of divine monarchy in which a king is unbounded by the laws of men. Rowe's reference to providence as an aspect of Tamerlane's kingship is not indicative of a political ambiguity; rather his portrayal of Tamerlane reflects the complexities of Whig ideology, which draws upon a variety of notions to burnish the authority and legitimacy of a constitutional monarch and hence assert the principles of the Revolution.

In other ways, Tamerlane's virtues are inarguably Whiggish. Like Gustavus, the patriotic warrior-prince, Tamerlane battles for the cause of liberty and justice as 'The Scourge of lawless Pride, and dire Ambition,/ The great Avenger of the groaning World.' (I.i.16-17). Tamerlane is depicted as a valiant military hero, 'Most Renown'd in War' (I.i.143), who is nevertheless inclined towards mercy and forgiveness; as he declares:

> But tho I dare face Death, and all the Dangers,
> Which furious War wears in its bloody Front,
> Yet I would chuse to fix my Fame by Peace,
> By Justice, and by Mercy. (II.ii.98-102)

As does Trotter's Gustavus, Tamerlane favours diplomatic solutions; embroiled in a war against the tyrant Bajazet, Tamerlane reminisces for a time when 'Neighbouring Princes met,/ Frequent in Friendly Parle, by cool Debates/ Preventing wasteful War' (II.ii.62-64). In both Trotter's and Rowe's plays, we witness Gustavus and Tamerlane opting for diplomacy and forgiveness whenever possible. Gustavus, as we have seen, attempts to negotiate with the vassals of the Danish king. After his initial victory over Bajazet, Tamerlane generously releases his defeated enemy and offers him a number of opportunities for peace and settlements. Yet in both cases, these peace overtures are met with treachery and violence. The Danish vassals threaten Gustavus' emissaries and extract information from them in order to mount an ambush on Gustavus' forces in Uppsala. Bajazet uses his freedom from captivity to plot a coup against Tamerlane, including an attempt to corrupt Tamerlane's captain and friend, Axalla. Tamerlane is forced into his final action against Bajazet, meting out the famous punishment of imprisoning him in a cage on public display like 'some

destructive Beast' (V.i.349). Similarly, in *Revolution*, the Danish ambush and their abduction of Constantia compels Gustavus to mount a vigorous counter-attack, which totally overwhelms the enemy and secures Sweden's liberty. The message in both dramas is clear: war is necessary, and any appeasement of the faithless enemy will only postpone the inevitable need to militarily confront and defeat the opponent. As Tamerlane explains:

> Mercy at length gives up her peaceful Scepter.
> And Justice sternly takes her turn to govern;
> 'Tis a rank World, and ask her keenest Sword,
> To cut up Villainy of monstrous growth. (V.i.333-6)

Trotter and Rowe are also concerned to depict their central protagonists as figures of reason and self-restraint. Both Gustavus and Tamerlane exercise self-mastery and base their actions on reason rather than passion or self-interest. We witness them cautioning their lieutenants to sublimate their passions for the public good. Gustavus warns Arwide against impulsively going to Constantia's aid, recalling his own dilemma early in the rebellion when the Danish king threatened the safety of his own family:

> These are the sallies
> Of unbridled passion; but recollect
> Your virtue, remember you're devoted to
> The public, think on your glorious cause,
> […] had I deserted it
> On Christiern's [*sic*] summons, had I laid down my arms
> To save a mother and a sister's life,
> How would you have condemned me of weakness and injustice? (II.iii.122-9)

This recalls a scene in Rowe's drama in which Moneses pleads with Tamerlane to rescue his beloved Arpasia from the clutches of the tyrant Bajazet. Dismissing his appeals, Tamerlane instructs Moneses to master his 'warring Passions':

> let thy Virtue
> Stand up, and answer to these warring Passions,
> That vex thy manly Temper. (III.ii.218-20)

So too Tamerlane finds himself attracted to Arpasia's charms but exercises self-restraint and resolves to leave her presence: '[w]isely from dangerous Passions I retreat' (IV.i.293).

In the tragic sub-plot of Arpasia's and Moneses' doomed love affair, Aspasia is a passive

victim in Rowe's homocentric vision of liberty in which 'women are not allowed full participation in the new order'.[85] Abducted by Bajazet at the altar, Arpasia is forced to marry the tyrannical monarch who violates '[t]he spotless whiteness of [her] Virgin Soul' (II.ii.361). Despite his otherwise implacable opposition to Bajazet's tyranny, Tamerlane refuses Moneses' appeal to annul Bajazet's and Arpasia's union, privileging the sacred bonds of marriage even when they were formed under duress. As Tamerlane explains:

> And woud'st thou have my partial Friendship break
> That holy Knot, which ty'd once, all Mankind
> Agree to hold Sacred, and Undissolvable?
> The Brutal Violence would stain my Justice,
> And brand me with a Tyrant's hated Name. (III.ii.201-5)

Rowe's conception of law and justice clearly distinguishes the state from the family; dissolving the 'holy Knot' of marriage, even one formed under violence and duress lies beyond the authority of a monarch, who is otherwise concerned with his subjects' liberty and rights. Rowe's Whiggish notion of consent and the protection of rights, then, is applicable to the state but not the family. Arpasia is only granted a form of liberty in her sleep when she dreams of obtaining '*a Divorce,/ In her own Choice*' (IV.i.73-74). She is forced to watch her beloved Moneses strangled to death by Bajazet's mutes, and she dies from the strain and grief. Bullard and McTague see the 'passively obedient stoicism' of Arpasia's (and Moneses') martyrdom as suggestive of Rowe's sympathies for Tory opponents of the Revolution.[86] I would suggest rather that this ambiguity arises from Rowe's distinction between the notion of sovereignty in a state and within a family. Arpasia's 'passive obedience' in the face of Bajazet's tyranny is condoned within the institution of marriage, which in Rowe's fraternal vision of Whiggish ideology is not governed by the same tenets of liberty and rights as that of the polity. Rowe appears to uphold a more conservative position on the politics of the family than that asserted by Locke. In the *Two Treatises*, Locke considers *'Conjugal Society*' as 'a voluntary Compact' (2.319), arguing that 'The *Power of the Husband* being so far from that of an absolute Monarch, that the *Wife*

[85] Douglas J. Canfield, 'Shifting Tropes of Ideology in English Serious Drama, Late Stuart to Early Georgian,' in *Cultural Readings of Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Theatre,* eds. Douglas J. Canfield and Deborah C. Payne (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 199.
[86] Bullard and McTague, introduction, 41.

has, in many cases, a Liberty to s*eparate* from him; where natural Right, or their Contract allows it' (2.321). This does not mean, however, that Locke held an egalitarian view of gender power relations within a marriage; indeed, he draws upon essentialist assumptions of male superiority to argue for a husband's dominant role over his wife: 'it therefore being necessary, that the last Determination, i.e. the Rule, should be placed somewhere, it naturally falls to the Man's share, as the abler and the stronger' (2.321).[87]

In contrast to her male fellow dramatist, Rowe, Trotter asserts a very different notion of Whiggish sexual politics. Her heroines, Constantia and Christina, demonstrate female agency and independent will, and they actively serve the cause of liberty even at the expense of their marital bonds. Trotter endows her female patriots with almost all the heroic virtues celebrated in the figure of Gustavus: courage, loyalty, patriotism, the privileging of civic duty over self-interest, and the privileging of reason over passion. Christina, acknowledged by Gustavus 'as my Life's Preserver' (V.ii.342), twice rescues the nation and its cause, in both cases defying her husband Beron to do so. Prior to the action in the play, we are told, she foils Beron's plot to betray Gustavus to the Danes, aiding the hero's escape and preserving his life by finding him 'a more faithful sanctuary' (I.i.250). Christina pays a high cost for her actions, driven to flee her tyrannical husband who imposes a public death sentence on her head:

> […] I view myself, driven like a vagabond
> About the world, flying a husband's cruelty,
> A wretch denied a refuge by her nearest friends,
> Wandering in a disguise that ill becomes
> Her sex, to beg protection from a stranger. (I.i.322-6)

Christina's rebellion against her husband and her escape from their marital home as a 'vagabond' who travels '[a]bout the world' without protection, can be seen as socially and morally transgressive. However, by eschewing any indication on the part of her heroine of 'tender Passion'

[87] Locke's position on gender politics is ambiguous and has long been the subject of scholarly dispute. Pateman's classic critique asserts that social contract theory is a fraternal pact that binds men together in a mutual domination of women; Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract: Aspects of Patriarchal Liberation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988). For a reading that argues for Locke's more progressive sexual politics, see Chris Nyland, 'John Locke and the Social Position of Women,' *History of Political Economy* 25, no. 1 (1993): 39-63.

for Gustavus, Trotter resolves any moral ambiguity about Christina's actions, isolating the purity of her motive which is entirely dedicated to preserving her nation. Christina's mistreatment at her husband's hands can be seen as an analogy for Danish tyranny and oppression of the Swedes, and Christina's rebellion against her husband is similarly justified by his cruel and tyrannical actions.[88] Beron describes the barbaric punishment he has in store for his wife – 'I'll have her stripped, and in the open Streets/ Fixed on a Rack, exposed to public view' (III.i.134-5) – emphasizing the extent of his cruelty and depravity. The public nature of the punishment (suggestive of the penalties imposed on traitors to the state), alludes to Trotter's common interest in both the politics of the state and of the family.

These concerns are topical given the radical shifts in the notions of allegiance and sovereignty brought to the fore by the ideological transformations of the Glorious Revolution. In the same year that *Revolution* was produced, Mary Astell famously asked: 'If Absolute Sovereignty be not necessary in a State, how come it be so in a Family?'[89] But while the Tory, High Anglican Astell indicts Whiggish ideology and upholds the notion of passive obedience in both the state and the family, Trotter interrogates this question to assert her feminocentric version of Lockean ideology that rebellion against a tyrannical husband is not only justified but necessary. Whereas Locke had viewed marriage as 'a voluntary Compact' without detailing the exact circumstances in which the dissolution of conjugal ties was permissible, Trotter expands this notion to argue for the right to resist a tyrannical and oppressive husband. As we shall see, it is through her active resistance to her treacherous husband that Christina is able to serve the cause of political liberty. Pilar Cuder-Dominguez argues that Christina's 'failure to perform her womanly or wifely duties is perceived in the tragedy as deviant and monstrous, and she eventually dies at the hand of her own husband'.[90] My reading comes to a different conclusion. Christina's death in the patriots' cause is not a punishment but a laudable example of heroic resistance to tyranny, in which a citizen sacrifices his or her life in

[88] See Lund, 'Right to Resist,' 147-52.
[89] Mary Astell, *Reflections upon Marriage*, in *Political Writings*, ed. Patricia Springborg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 17.
[90] Pilar Cuder-Dominguez, *Stuart Women Playwrights, 1613-1713* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 115.

the service of the nation. This notion would later be given poignant dramatic expression in Addison's *Cato*, in which Cato glorifies his son's death in the cause of liberty: 'What pity is it/ That we can die but once to serve our country!'[91] In *Revolution*, the similar nobility of Christina's self-sacrifice is repeatedly underscored by the praise of her fellow Swedes, who laud her as 'our generous preserver/ Never forgot; let fame record her virtue' (V.ii.371-2).

Throughout the play, we witness the patriot Christina acting with noble courage. During her vagabond travels in male disguise, Christina joins Gustavus' rebel forces, and when the Swedes are ambushed by the Danes she finds herself compelled to join the fighting on the battlefield. Thus Trotter provides a striking depiction of a woman engaged in martial combat. In Christina's soliloquy after the battle which explores different concepts of bravery, Trotter confronts the notion of women's 'active valour' (II.ii.120), at a time of military conflict when martial valour was a crucial motif. Christina confesses her 'trembling heart' (II.ii.109) and dread of battle but concludes that women's fears of military action originate from 'the force of Custom and Opinion' (II.ii.114) and 'where our honour's placed, we oft/ Have shown in its defence a no less manly daring' (II.ii.122-3). This is underscored by Christina's courage on the battlefield where she acquits herself honourably in facing '[t]he Dreadfull'st pomp and horrors of the battle' (II.ii.126).

At the end of the play, Christina serves the patriots' cause once again by revealing Beron's deceitful machinations in falsifying documents and she thus absolves Arwide of false charges of 'a most detested Treason' (IV.ii.59). Christina pays for this deed with her life, dying from wounds inflicted by the cruel Beron. Her revelations not only enable Arwide to escape the death sentence imposed by the Swedish senate, but prove that the Swedish insurgents still support the cause for independence against Beron's devious 'design to embroil the unsettled nation' (V.ii.331). Christina's sacrifice is hailed by Gustavus who calls on his people to memorialize her patriotic heroism: 'Who ere shall hear of Sweden's great deliverance,/ And every nation join in her just praise' (V.ii.374-5). The terms upon which Christina is lauded recall Gustavus' own role as the preserver and deliverer of

[91]Joseph Addison, *Cato: A Tragedy, and Selected Essays*, eds. Christine Dunn Henderson and Mark E. Yellin (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2004), 84.

the nation, thus underscoring her instrumental role in securing Sweden's liberty.

Trotter's notion of feminine heroic virtue is also embodied in Constantia, 'th' unshaken patriot' (III.i.212); as a hostage of the Archbishop, Constantia courageously faces martyrdom in the cause of Sweden's liberty. Like Arpasia in *Tamerlane*, Constantia is held captive by the enemy, but unlike Rowe's passive tragic heroine, Constantia acts with independence and self-determination. Constantia willingly faces death rather than having her husband turn himself in for her ransom, rightly and rationally acknowledging him as the more vital component of the rebellion: 'My life had been a check on Arwide's valour./ An obstacle to Sweden's liberty' (III.i.276-8). She courageously defies her Danish captors, arguing with the Archbishop point by point in a lucid and intellectually sophisticated speech, which articulates the basis of the rebellion through a Lockean resistance to arbitrary tyranny:

> Is it rebellion for a wretched people
> Oppressed and ruined, by that power they gave
> For their defence, the safety of their rights,
> To seek redress? When kings who are in trust
> The guardians of the laws, the public peace and welfare,
> Confess no law but arbitrary will,
> Or know no use of power but to oppress,
> And injure, with impunity, […]
> The people, of whose due obedience, just
> Protection, is the natural and essential condition. (II.ii.56-66)

Trotter assigns a female patriot (and a character in whom she appears personally invested given that she adopted the name for her own writing persona) as the most articulate proponent of the tenets of constitutional monarchy. Constantia mounts a powerful defence of contractarian theories of government: power, she argues, originates from the people and is held 'in trust' by a governor for the primary objective to protect 'the laws' and 'welfare' of the people. Displaying a Lockean emphasis on the primacy of natural law, Constantia's argument for the right to self-defence is based on natural law: 'And justice must allow that self-defence, to which/ Nature so universally incites' (II.ii.82-83). Her eloquent defence of a citizen's right to resist an oppressive and arbitrary government is informed by Locke's famous assertion in the *Two Treatises*:

> And whosoever in Authority exceeds the Power given him by the Law, and

> makes use of the Force he has under his Command, to compass that upon the Subject, which the Law allows not, ceases in that to be a Magistrate, and acting without Authority, may be opposed, as any other Man who by force invades the Right of another. (2.400-1)

Constantia's exchange with the Archbishop also engages with religio-political concerns, suggestive of the bitter partisan struggles which marked the High Church revival in the reign of Anne. The Whiggish impulse for religious toleration, in particular towards the dissenting community, was a source of intense concern for Tory-High Church partisans. At the heart of the 'Church in Danger' propaganda was Tory anxiety about religious pluralism, legally sanctioned by the Act of Toleration of 1689, and seen as underpinning the proliferation of dissenting chapels and academies and the perceived spread of deism and irreligion. What exacerbated the situation, in Tory eyes, was the tolerant attitude of post-Revolution Latitudinarian bishops, including Gilbert Burnet, the Bishop of Salisbury, who was a patron and connection of Trotter's. In *Revolution*, Constantia's heated debate with the Archbishop demonstrates her Whiggish emphasis on religious toleration and a suggestive anti-clerical bias. The prelate condemns the Swedish rebels as 'impious/ Reformers' (II.ii.144-5) and excommunicates from the Catholic Church, while Constantia launches into an attack on politicized religion and the role of the Church in supporting an oppressive and tyrannical government: 'Well may religion's sacred name/ Be fallen into contempt, when thus abused,/ To serve the vilest, the most impious ends!' (II.ii.124-6). At a time when the alliance between Tories and High Church partisans was fuelling bitter partisan discord, Trotter's attack on politicized religion and 'ambitious churchmen' (II.ii.137) aligns her with a Whig position. In an impassioned speech, Constantia argues that Christianity implies religious toleration; she draws upon the figures of Islamic 'infidels' to condemn intra-Christian conflict, a motif previously employed by her political mentor, Locke:[92]

> Can that religion
> Of which the spirit, and distinctive character
> Is mercy, forgiving injuries, and universal love,
> Can it ever authorize revenge? Incite

[92] In *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (1689), Locke writes that 'the *Turks* in the mean while silently stand by, and laugh to see with what inhumane Cruelty Christians thus rage against Christians'; see John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration and Other Writings,* ed. Mark Goldie (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2010), 21. For a full account of Locke's theology, see John. C. Higgins-Biddle, introduction to *The Clarendon Edition of the Works of John Locke: The Reasonableness of Christianity: As delivered in the Scriptures* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), xv-cxv.

> To persecution, and bloody massacres?
> Well may infidels be scandalized
> At our most holy faith, when its professors
> Themselves impute to it the most unnatural
> Impieties? (II.ii.116-24)

Trotter's impulse for religious toleration is also apparent in her private correspondence. As she confides to Thomas Burnet in 1704: 'I wish indeed there was no such thing as distinction of churches; and then I doubt not there would be much more real religion'.[93] In another letter, she comments on her friendships with those of a different Christian creed: 'I consider nothing in the opinion of my friends, but what is likely to influence their morals; and provided they worship the true God, and acknowledge the doctrine and authority of *Jesus Christ*, I think we are sufficiently united in *religion* for all the ends of friendship'.[94]

This Whiggish tendency for religious toleration is similarly observed in Rowe's drama. When Tamerlane is castigated by a dervish for his failure to use military force in the cause of the Moslem faith, the King responds with a defence of religious plurality:

> no Law Divine condemns the Virtuous,
> For differing from the Rules your Schools devise.
> […] And (tho' by several Names and Titles worshipp'd)
> Heav'n takes the various Tribute of their praise. (III.ii.50-56)

In *Revolution*, Trotter's religious stance is complicated and problematized by her identity as a Catholic and her treatment of the issue of the Swedish reformation. Constantia and the Archbishop debate about the rise of Protestantism; the latter censures Constantia's female outspokenness, equating it with the spread of Protestant beliefs: 'When women preach, 'twill be with Luther's aid:/ A blessed reformation' (II.ii.129-130). Constantia's retort reveals a complex view of the reformation, in which she appears to denounce Lutheran schism and its 'fatal/ Consequences':

> You've shut your eyes against our present miseries
> And future dangers; else would you not oppose
> Your country's liberty, or give pretext
> To Luther's growing schism, which (with its fatal
> Consequences) will all be set to the account

[93] Trotter to Thomas Burnet, 8 August 1704, in Trotter, *Works*, 2:176.
[94] Trotter to Thomas Burnet, 2 February 1704, in Trotter, *Works*, 2:167.

> Of those ambitious churchmen, who've turned
> The spiritual power to secular tyrannical
> Dominion […]. (II.ii.132-9)

Critics have rarely commented on this suggestive passage nor addressed Trotter's ambiguous religio-political position. Sorelius equates her apparent condemnation of Luther with the fact that 'Trotter was still a Catholic', without attempting to reconcile this stance with her assertive contractarian politics.[95] Karen O'Brien unproblematically concludes that Trotter operated within the framework of Latitudinarian Anglicanism, 'adopted by her after her conversion from Catholicism in 1707'.[96] Yet as we have seen, Trotter was an advocate of religious toleration even prior to her reconversion to the Anglican faith, a position apparent in her play, *Revolution*, and her private correspondence. What the abovementioned passage demonstrates is Trotter's opposition to religious 'schism' and division and her vocal anti-clerical stance, articulated from within her position in the Catholic Church. In the light of the partisan religious struggles of the time, Trotter's treatment of the Lutheran schism of sixteenth-century Sweden addresses contemporary partisan conflict on the issues of toleration and dissent fuelled by the Tory 'Church in Danger' campaign. Constantia condemns the 'fatal/ Consequences' of religious discord but significantly, she attributes the blame on 'ambitious churchmen', whose intervention in the secular domain is seen as the source of propagating this division.

As their exchange makes clear, the Archbishop and Constantia are both Catholics, but ones who hold very different positions on religion and politics. Whilst the prelate employs the authority of the Church to uphold absolutist and arbitrary government, Constantia (a figure closely identified with Trotter herself), advocates religious toleration and condemns the politicization of religion, in her scathing depiction of 'ambitious churchmen, who've turned/ The spiritual power to secular tyrannical/ Dominion'. In this play produced while she was still a practising Catholic, Trotter eschews a conventionally Whiggish anti-Catholic stance, as propounded, for example, by Dennis in his *Liberty*

[95] Sorelius, introduction, xxvi.
[96] O'Brien, *Enlightenment*, 51.

*Asserted*.[97] We should note that while the historical Gustavus Vasa had been seen as a key figure of the Swedish reformation, and was lauded in Mitchel's translation as a Protestant patriot and 'Establisher of the Reform'd Religion', Trotter's otherwise glowing tribute to Gustavus' virtues pointedly neglects to highlight this aspect of his reputation.[98] At the time *Revolution* was produced, Trotter was still publicly loyal to her Catholic creed, but it is a Catholicism which accommodates unconventional views on ecclesiastical authority and religious toleration. Trotter's anti-clerical stance situates her within the Whiggish and Lockean critique of priestcraft, which targets Tory-High Church partisans seen as opponents of the Williamite Toleration Act and the principles of the Revolution itself. This can be reconciled with Trotter's strong identification with Locke's political and religious thinking, and her assertion of a Lockean contractarian polity. Indeed, Constantia's speech equates the Archbishop's oppressive politics with the propagation of religious divisions: 'else would you not oppose/ Your country's liberty, or give pretext/ To Luther's growing schism'. In his critique on priestcraft amongst Locke and his circle, Mark Goldie establishes that anti-clericalism was not an impulse exclusively associated with deism and the subversion of Christianity, but 'served equally the ecclesiastical and political causes of post-Revolution latitudinarian Anglicanism'.[99] Goldie argues that 'Whig authors engaged in domesticating anti-clericalism within the verge of latitudinarian churchmanship and thereby serv[ed] the defence of the Toleration Act and of the Revolution itself, of which many Anglican clergy remained deeply suspicious and resentful'.[100] As my reading demonstrates, Trotter's complex religio-political identity encompasses a Whiggish anti-clerical position, in line with her Lockean sympathies and stance on religious toleration, nothwithstanding her Catholic faith.

We should also note that *Revolution* was produced at a transformative time for Trotter's religious convictions. The year after the play was staged, Trotter published her *Discourse* of 1707,

[97] Dennis' *Liberty Asserted* depicts the Catholic French colonial forces in Canada as arbitrary, treacherous and cruel; see Wilson, *Patriots*, 69-93.
[98] Mitchel, translator's preface. For Gustavus Vasa's reputation as a Protestant patriot, see Omberg, 'Gustavus Vasa,' 22-24.
[99] Mark Goldie, 'John Locke, the Early Lockeans, and Priestcraft,' *Intellectual History Review* 28, no. 1 (January 2018): 125.
[100] Goldie, 'Priestcraft,' 140.

which comprised a critique of Catholic doctrine and marked her return to the Anglican Church. Gilbert Burnet, who guided her conversion and contributed the preface to this work, reveals that Trotter had 'been for some time dissatisfied with several doctrines and practices in [the Catholic] church'.[101] The Bishop draws attention to the utility of Trotter's work: 'they may be at all times useful to those of our own communion, that want to be fortified against the bold pretences to infallibility to the church of *Rome*; and will, I hope, help to open the eyes of such of the *Romish Communion*'.[102] Just as Trotter's defence of Locke's religious philosophy had gained her the public praise of members of the Whiggish Lockean circle, her reconversion to the Anglican Church was publicly endorsed and appropriated for the Whiggish cause by a leading Latitudinarian bishop.

As we have seen, Constantia embodies Trotter's distinctive conception of feminine heroic virtue: a figure of moral courage, an articulate defender of contractarian government, who, notwithstanding her Catholic faith, espouses religious toleration and an anti-clerical stance. The rest of the play dramatizes other aspects of Constantia's heroism, including the privileging of reason over passions, and public duty over self-interest. Constantia's actions serve as a counterfoil to the impulsive action of her husband Arwide, who jeopardizes the patriots' cause by abandoning his command to come to her rescue. She sees Arwide's rescue as a negation of her virtuous act of self-sacrifice:

> Alas, was this the way to save my life!
> Too sure thou hast given me death, and have deprived me
> Of all the consolation, all the glory of it;
> I've only now in death to think myself
> The wretched cause of Arwide's, and my poor
> Deserted country's ruin. (III.i.316-21)

Like Gustavus, who continued his patriotic struggle despite the threat to his family, Constantia is guided by a sense of civic duty above all else. She sublimates self-interest and emotional ties to privilege the nation's cause, in contrast to her husband Arwide who despite his courage on the battlefield is prey to the 'tender movings of his soul' (III.i.182) and his 'too fatal kindness' (III.i.185).

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[101] Gilbert Burnet, preface to *A Discourse Concerning a Guide in Controversies* [etc], by Catharine Trotter (London, 1707).
[102] Ibid.

This recalls Christina's soliloquy on the different types of bravery assigned to the sexes and her contention that women are more courageous in facing other forms of threats and perils including 'the less/ honourable dangers of pain, disease' (II.ii.117-8) and 'poverty' (II.ii.119). Both Constantia and Arwide are tested for their commitment to public good, and while Constantia exemplifies all the necessary virtues of a patriot, her husband is found wanting. Trotter's emphasis on Constantia's superior heroism, then, departs from Locke's position on marital power relations in the *Two Treatises*, in which he assumes a man's dominant role based on his perceived greater strength and abilities (2.321).

Towards the end of the play, Constantia proves her unwavering loyalty to the country once again in her willingness to expose Arwide as a traitor even at the cost of his life. As in the case of Christina, Constantia privileges loyalty to her country over her marital bonds. But whilst Christina's resistance to her husband appears justified by his cruelty and tyranny, Constantia genuinely loves Arwide and the conflict between loyalty to her husband and her country causes great emotional anguish: 'On what a Tryal hast thou set my virtue!/ Thus to divide my Duty to my Country, and my Husband' (IV.ii.10-11). Trotter transforms the usual staple of tragedy – the conflict between love and duty – into a test of feminine civic virtue, and Constantia passes the test courageously. Constantia reveals what she believes was Arwide's treacherous agreement with the Danes, and thus chooses her country over her husband, subordinating love and self-interest to the nobler cause of public good. As we have seen, however, Arwide is saved by the actions of another female patriot, Christina, who reveals her knowledge of the truth to pay the ultimate cost of her life. Despite the almost fatal consequences to himself, Arwide acknowledges his wife's superior commitment to civic duty which exceeds his own. He hails Constantia's 'exalted virtue' (V.ii.378), calling on his countrymen to follow in her example:

> Oh would men emulate thy great example,
> Renounce all private ends, give up their dear,
> Their warmest passions, to the public safety,
> Each would be happy in the common good. (V.ii.380-3)

*Revolution* embodies Trotter's distinctive conception of Whig ideology and feminine heroic virtue. At a time of military conflict, Trotter stakes her affiliations to the presiding war government and vigorously asserts the principles of the Revolution, as a patriotic reminder of the vital need to strive for political liberty. Notwithstanding her Catholic faith, Trotter articulates her commitment to Whig tenets and beliefs, much of which was drawn from Locke's philosophy: the preservation of liberty and property, a government by consent, the right to resist an oppressive governor, and religious toleration. Indeed, Trotter's identity as a Catholic alerts us to the richness and complexity of Whig culture, which accommodates surprisingly diverse religio-political positions. Trotter also refashions Whig ideology to assert a proto-feminist position whereby resistance to tyranny is not only justified in the state but in the family. In Trotter's female-centred vision of liberty, women share in celebrated heroic traits and act as moral agents for public good. Christina embodies moral courage and physical valour – the necessary traits of a citizen of a Britain at war. Constantia similarly encapsulates heroic virtue but with an emphasis on reason and intellect, serving as an articulate defender of the philosophical tenets of the Revolution. Trotter's heroines embody her feminised conception of Whig civic virtue; they enable the reform of their society, from tyranny and oppression to liberty and justice, whereby kings and leaders, as well as citizens are obligated to sublimate private interest and privilege public good.

# 3

## Commercial Virtue:
## Susanna Centlivre's *The Gamester* (1705) and *The Basset Table* (1705)

> Writing is a kind of Lottery in this fickle Age, and Dependence on the Stage as precarious as the Cast of a Die; the Chance may turn up, and a Man may write to please the Town, but 'tis uncertain, since we see our best Authors sometimes fail.[1]

In the preface to her *Love's Contrivance* (1703), Susanna Centlivre articulates the acute commercial pressures of her career as a professional playwright. Her cynical comparison of playwriting to the 'Lottery' or a 'Cast of a Die' conveys the difficulties facing the post-Revolution theatre; the erstwhile vehicles of court and royal patronage of the early Restoration era had been transformed into competitive commercial enterprises, whose success was dependent on the vagaries of a more diverse audience. Yet Centlivre's gambling metaphors also gesture to something not often acknowledged: her acute engagement with the speculative and risk-taking spirit of the age, when the enormous popularity of gambling paralleled and underpinned the development of a nascent credit economy. This interest is apparent in Centlivre's other works. *A Bold Stroke for a Wife* (1718) provides detailed and authentic depictions of contemporary share trading in its dramatization of 'stockjobbers' at Jonathan's Coffee-house in Exchange Alley, who trade both 'South Sea bonds' and 'Class Lottery tickets'.[2] Centlivre's colourful description of the market exchange includes references to 'East India' (IV.i.4) bonds, the 'Civil List Lottery' (IV.i.19), bulls and bears (IV.i.20-21). Centlivre was also one of the few contemporary women who contributed to literature on the South Sea Company, the notorious ill-fated scheme which set off a frenzy of speculation. In a poem addressed to a director of the South Sea Company, Centlivre boldly appeals for shares in the scheme – '*South-Sea*…Gold' – as a reward for her loyalty to the Whig cause.[3]

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[1] Centlivre, preface to *Love's Contrivance*.

[2] Susanna Centlivre, *A Bold Stroke for a Wife*, ed. Nancy Copeland (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview, 1995), 95. Subsequent references appear parenthetically in the text by act, scene, line number.

[3] Susanna Centlivre, *A Woman's Case* [etc] (London, 1720), 5.

This chapter explores the two dramas in which Centlivre displays her most sustained engagement with the notions of money and speculation: *The Gamester* (1705) and *The Basset Table* (1705). I consider Centlivre's gaming plays in the context of the lively moral debate on gaming at the time, as well as the concurrent emergence of a new credit economy borne out of the 'financial revolution' of the 1690s. Both dramas were staged in 1705 – a year that marked a decisive point in Centlivre's dramatic career in her timely and calculated shift towards the dominant reforming discourse of the day. Centlivre's gaming plays were performed at the height of the second Collierite controversy (1703-8) – a period that witnessed renewed calls for stage reform, including Queen Anne's 1704 proclamation for stricter regulation of the stage, which followed the traumatic aftermath of the Great Storm of November 1703. Centlivre's intention to conform to a more morally stringent climate is apparent in her seemingly 'Collierite' dedication of *The Gamester* to George, Earl of Huntingdon, an aristocratic Whig soldier, which asserts her drama's objective 'according to the first intent of Plays, [to] recommend Morality'.[4] It is my contention that Centlivre's reformist stance on gaming keys into the lively contemporary debate on gaming, whilst situating herself in the socially acceptable drive for reform. Centlivre's focus on gaming dramatizes the thrilling yet destabilizing surge in speculation in her society that fuelled the development of a new credit economy, in which we know Centlivre exhibited a keen interest. The main focus of my reading is on Centlivre's contribution to the evolution of Whig commercial virtues, which assert the values of a new commercial society within a paradigm of civilized refinement and 'politeness'.

## ***The Gamester*** **(1705)**

*The Gamester*, an adaptation of Jean-Francois Regnard's *Le Joueur* (1696), was Centlivre's first major theatrical success. The play was performed at Lincoln's Inn Field's in February 1705 and achieved a commendable initial run of fourteen nights; it was acted for the benefit of the author on 22 February 1705, the twelfth night of the production, which was also the date the work was

[4] Centlivre, dedication of *The Gamester*.

published.[5] For the first time in her dramatic career, Centlivre premiered a play with an all-star cast. The young John Verbriggen (who played Mirabell in Congreve's *The Way of the World*) took on the role of Valere, the gamester rake who is in love with Angelica, the virtuous heiress, played by Anne Bracegirdle. Elizabeth Barry acted as Angelica's sister, Lady Wealthy, who is courted by the upright Mr Lovewell, played by Thomas Betterton. *The Gamester* continued to be revived and repeated for many years, especially for benefits, and was the first play to be produced at the new 'Kit-Cat' theatre at Haymarket in April 1705, signalling the company's confidence in its ability to attract a favourable audience for its opening night of spoken drama.[6] As late as 1756, the play was still occasionally performed, and its last known London staging was at the Drury Lane theatre on 13 October 1756.[7]

Despite its contemporary popularity, however, *The Gamester* has received relatively little sustained critical attention. To date, a modern scholarly edition of the play has yet to be produced. Critical analyses mainly comprise brief summaries of the play in the midst of biography or as part of larger comparative work. Much of this criticism focuses on the extent to which Centlivre subverts the reformist role of the stage. Jacqueline Pearson views *The Gamester* as influenced by 'spoofs' of reformist plays such as Farquhar's *The Constant Couple* (1699) and *Sir Harry Wildair* (1701).[8] Derek Hume dismisses *The Gamester* as 'a highly competent if entirely implausible exercise in reform and reclamation'.[9] Victoria Warren views *The Gamester*'s reforms as not wholly moral but expedient, concluding that Valere does not consider gaming as an evil but as something that 'prevents man from getting ahead'.[10]

A critic attuned to the commercial elements of *The Gamester* is LuAnn Venden Herrell, who situates the drama in the context of the 1695-96 Recoinage Act, to conclude that the work is a 'cautionary and pessimistic portrayal of a social system struggling to come to terms with the move away from the conservative Lockean model of the possessive individual to the more modern model

[5] See *Flying-Post*, February 20-22, 1705; and *Daily Courant*, February 20, 1705.
[6] See Downes, *Roscius Anglicanus*, 99.
[7] Bowyer, *Centlivre*, 65.
[8] Pearson, introduction, xiv.
[9] Robert D. Hume, *The Development of English Drama in the Late Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976), 469.
[10] Victoria Warren, 'Gender and Genre in Susanna Centlivre's *The Gamester* and *The Basset Table*,' *SEL* 43, no. 3 (Summer 2003): 614.

of the economic subject'.[11] The play, Herrell contends, 'rejects this proto-Marxian model of the more modern economic subject, but not without raising doubts about the impossibility of returning to a more stable landed system'.[12] I am indebted to Herrell's alertness to *The Gamester*'s commercial interests, but depart from her premise of a straightforward 'shift from a system based on land to one based on ready money'.[13] As Pocock has shown, the post-Revolution period witnessed an ongoing conflict between two competing post-feudal ideas: one agrarian (country/landed) and the other commercial (city/monied).[14] Herrell's apolitical reading obscures the ideological struggle between Country and Tory-aligned 'landed interests' and the largely Whiggish 'monied interests'.[15] Attention to Centlivre's Whiggish commitments alerts us to the ways in which she contributes to the Whig ideological drive to regain moral ground through the promotion of a new secular code of commercial virtues. More recently, Rebecca Tierney-Hynes' comparative reading of Centlivre's two gaming plays and *A Bold Stroke for a Wife* brings together Centlivre's interests in marriage and Whiggish commercialism to argue that the dramas draw 'attention to the affective elements of the new mercantilism [and] the ways in which they might define and equalize the contractual exchanges both of marriage and of the wider economy'.[16] Like most political readings of Centlivre's work, however, Tierney-Hynes' critique adopts a straightforward understanding of a pro-commerce 'Whiggish mercantilism', without due attention to the complex ideological battle to reclaim moral and political capital, which underpinned the development of Whig commercial virtues. Tierney-Hynes also takes on the customary focus on marriage in Centlivre's plays, in relation to a proto-feminist, Lockean

[11] LuAnn Venden Herrell, "'Luck be a Lady Tonight" or At Least make me a Gentleman: Economic Anxiety in Centlivre's *The Gamester*,' *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 32.2 (Fall 1999): 46.
[12] Ibid., 46.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, 436-61.
[15] For how the Country discourse became monopolized by the Tories in the reign of Anne, see pp.25-26. Generally, progressive Whigs most often represented the 'monied interest': an alliance between commercial leaders and wealthy aristocrats who invested in the country's lucrative overseas trade. Tories tended to support the 'landed interest', which mainly comprised country aristocrats and the gentry whose smaller, rent-based fortunes and influence were perceived to be threatened by the rapid expansion of the credit economy.
[16] Rebecca Tierney-Hynes, 'Emotional Economies: Centlivre's Comic Ends,' *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 45, no. 1 (2016): 84.

version of a freely contracted marriage.[17] My reading seeks to expand and complicate our understanding of Centlivre's political commitments by refocusing attention away from contractual marriage towards an important but overlooked aspect of Centlivre's Whiggism: her contribution to the evolution of a modern, progressive Whiggism grounded in commercial values and a virtuous sociability, a position most often associated with her male contemporaries: Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third Earl of Shaftesbury; Daniel Defoe; Joseph Addison; and Richard Steele. As Lawrence Klein explains: Whig commercial virtues 'linked the establishment of liberty, the growth of commerce, and the refinement of manners in a comprehensive and progressive ideology'.[18]

My reading of *The Gamester* employs the two important contexts of commerce and reform, locating the play within its immediate historical moment of a reformist age, during which moral condemnation of the vice of gaming coincided with widespread anxieties about an emergent credit-based economy. I consider Centlivre's Whiggish commercial interests in relation to the progressive Whig cultural ideology espoused by her contemporaries, Addison, Steele, and Defoe, which links new commercial modes with the paradigm of civilized refinement and 'politeness'. As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, the ideology of 'politeness' was a transformative code of commerce and manners, which established and defended the values of an emergent commercial society. 'Politeness' is a mode of virtuous sociability which arose as a response to the perceived need to regulate and discipline the appetites of a new commercial world. Central to the discourse of 'politeness' is the cultivation of taste, manners and true friendships as a means to release man's capacity for benevolence and overcome the inherent corruption of modern commercial life. My reading of Centlivre's gaming plays brings out her distinctively feminised notion of progressive Whiggism, which articulates the virtues of commercial modernity, while underscoring the role and significance of women in the new credit economy.

Centlivre's gaming plays combine social comedy with the reformation of erring characters, and are very much in tune with the moralizing note of contemporary 'reform comedies', including Richard

[17] For political readings of the marital contract in Centlivre's plays, see Vivian Davis, 'Dramatizing the Sexual Contract: Congreve and Centlivre,' *SEL* 51, no. 3 (2011): 519-43; and Anderson, *Female Playwrights*, 109-38.
[18] Lawrence Klein, 'Joseph Addison's Whiggism,' in Womersley, *"Cultures of Whiggism"*, 113.

Steele's *The Lying Lover* (1703), Colley Cibber's *The Careless Husband* (1704) and Steele's *The Tender Husband* (1705). Centlivre's *The Basset Table* (1705) appears to have inspired Cibber's gaming play, *The Lady's Last Stake* (1707), which echoes Centlivre's central theme of the reformation of a female gamester.[19] Like the moral comedies of her Whig contemporaries, Centlivre's gaming plays participate in the transvaluation of culture through the reclamation of flawed individuals from vices associated with a flamboyant libertine creed, such as duelling, adultery and gambling. The reform plot of Centlivre's *The Gamester* centres on the reformation of an inveterate gambler, and enables her to interrogate and explore the appetitive values of an emergent credit society, while asserting a feminised version of commercial virtues centred on a virtuous and commercially able heroine. In the next section, I examine the significance of gaming in Centlivre's society before proceeding to establish the links between gambling and the speculative credit economy.

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'Gaming' as dramatized in Centlivre's plays was understood in early modern terms as the 'playing of a game for stakes hazarded by the players, especially with cards and dice'.[20] In *The Gamester*, the gambling rake Valere's chosen game is hazard, one of the most popular dice games of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; played with two dice by any number of people, it is a game reliant entirely on chance. Gaming was both an enormously popular activity in Centlivre's society, as well a target of a lively moral debate about the 'vice' of gaming. The popularity of Charles Cotton's gambling manual, *The Compleat Gamester* (1674), which describes 'all manner of usual and most gentile Games either on CARDS or DICE', attests to the intense public interest in gaming. The tract went through six editions between 1674 and 1726, and was continued by Richard Seymour for five further editions throughout the eighteenth century.[21] Gaming was also condemned by contemporary commentators and reformists, who raised serious moral and financial concerns about

[19] See Laura J. Rosenthal, *Playwrights and Plagiarists in Early Modern England: Gender, Authorship and Literary Property* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 204-42.
[20] Nicholas Tosney, 'Legacies of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century gaming in modern attitudes towards gambling,' *Community, Work & Family* 13, no. 3 (August 2010): 350.
[21] Charles Cotton, *The Compleat Gamester* (London, 1674).

its damaging impact on society and individuals. In 1704, a year before the staging of Centlivre's gaming plays, John Dennis compares gambling to a host of other dangerous vices: 'Gaming; a Sin that is attended with several others […] Lying, Swearing, Perjury, Fraud, Quarrels, Murders, Fornication, Adultery'.[22] In the same year, the Marquis of Halifax, in his 'Advice to a Daughter' (1704), issued a warning about the financial and moral repercussions of gambling:

> To deep *Play* […] will give Occasion to the World to ask *spiteful Questions*. How you dare venture to *lose*, and what means you have to *pay* such great *sums*? If you pay *exactly*, it will be enquired from whence the *Money* cometh? If you owe, and especially to a Man, you must be so very *Civil* to him for his forbearance.[23]

Halifax's critique incorporates concerns about the severe financial losses associated with 'deep *Play*', as well as the moral and sexual implications of gaming for women in particular. His reference to 'deep *Play*' describes the intense mode of gambling popular in aristocratic circles of the time, comprising continuous play over prolonged periods of time for high stakes that usually take the form of securities or land. Concerns about the scale of gambling losses led to legal restrictions in Anne's reign; the Gaming Act of 1710 prohibits the use of non-monetary stakes like land and tenements, and limits the amount of gaming losses to a maximum of £10, otherwise recoverable in court within three months.[24] Hazard and Basset, the fast-paced, high stakes dice games depicted in Centlivre's gaming plays, were eventually banned in 1738 due to concerns over the heavy and rapid losses resulting from these games which relied entirely on chance.[25]

Centlivre's society also witnessed the transformation of gaming from an elite, aristocratic pastime into a widespread, popular activity. Gaming first became entrenched in court circles in the Stuart era as a mode of aristocratic self-display.[26] During the Restoration, the courtiers' deep play at 'Groom Porters' or Charles II's court became an important marker of their libertine lifestyle and

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[22] John Dennis, *The Person of Quality's Answer to Mr Collier's Letter* [etc] (London, 1704), 29.
[23] George Savile, the Marquis of Halifax, *Miscellanies by the late Marquis of Halifax* (London, 1704), 82.
[24] David Miers, *Regulating Commercial Gambling: Past, Present, and Future* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 28.
[25] Tosney, 'Legacies,' 350, 353.
[26] Miers, *Gambling*, 2.

privileged status.[27] Thomas Kavanagh explains the 'performative' elements of gaming: gambling was one of 'the primary social practices through which nobles sought to affirm their identity within an individual and group ethos defining them as independent of the ever-increasing power of money'.[28] By the late seventeenth century, however, the culture of gambling had become widespread throughout the country, extending beyond elite circles into a variety of locales, which offered various types of gaming including lotteries, cards, dice and wagers.[29] Many inns of the period were 'ordinaries', so called because they offered a simple meal for a fixed price followed by gaming.[30] As dramatized in Centlivre's *A Bold Stroke for a Wife*, lottery tickets were sold by stockjobbers in coffee-houses in Exchange Alley. Gaming had permeated the popular coffee-houses of Addison and Steele's era, and part of their attraction was their provision for gambling. Addison reputedly won a thousand pounds in a lottery, and Colley Cibber's significant gambling losses had apparently incentivized him into producing new plays.[31] Gaming also had acute social repercussions; playwrights such as Cibber who reportedly enjoyed the company of aristocrats found gambling houses a common and socially egalitarian meeting place.[32] In *The Gamester*, the inveterate gambler, Valere, praises the egalitarianism of gaming: 'now I think there can be nothing more Moral – It unites Men of all Ranks, – the Lord and the Peasant – the haughty Duchess, and the City Dame – the Marquis and the Footman, all without Distinction play together'.[33] By contrast, gaming's socially levelling effect was a target of Jeremy Collier in his anti-gaming tract, *An Essay Upon Gaming, in a dialogue between Callimachus and Dolomedes* (1713), which condemned gaming's perceived ability to upset traditional hierarchies and produce a random redistribution of wealth. Collier's critique underscores the perceived risk of social and political upheaval of a reliance on chance and gambling. Significantly, the tract was reissued in 1720, the year of the spectacular collapse of the

[27] Jessica Richard, '"Putting to Hazard a Certainty": Lotteries and the Romance of Gambling in Eighteenth-Century England,' *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 40, no. 1 (2011): 182.
[28] Thomas M. Kavanagh, *Enlightenment and the Shadows of Chance: The Novel and the Culture of Gambling in Eighteenth-Century France* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1993), 46.
[29] Richard, 'Lotteries,' 183.
[30] Miers, *Gambling*, 3.
[31] Bowyer, *Centlivre*, 60.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Susanna Centlivre, *The Gamester* (London, 1705), 36-7. Subsequent references are to this edition.

South Sea venture which precipitated a national financial crisis.[34]

Widespread anxiety about gaming was pronounced in the early eighteenth century, at a time when the country was gripped by the fever of speculative activity. As Jane Milling contends: 'gaming tended to be discussed in increasingly pejorative terms, and its evil consequences enumerated, in direct relation to the development of the speculative circulation of money within the new economy'.[35] Indeed, the prevalence of gambling in Centlivre's society was closely linked to a growing culture of risk-taking, which underpinned the nascent credit economy that had emerged from the radical economic restructurings of the 'financial revolution' of the 1690s. As Nicholas Tosney observes of the period: 'a climate had developed in which risk was not only tolerated but relished'.[36] By the turn of the seventeenth century, a considerable number of people were engaged in a variety of speculative activities on a spectrum from gaming with cards and dice, betting, banking, investment, insurance and lotteries, activities which I will explore further in the following paragraphs.[37]

The 'financial revolution' of the 1690s, driven in part by the need to fund King William's expensive continental wars, produced fundamental changes to England's economy. The foundation of the Bank of England in 1694 for the purpose of raising funds for William's military expenses established a National Debt dependent on public credit – the bank's initial share capital of £1.2 million was raised by public individuals against the anticipated government revenue of future excise taxes.[38] The bank issued its contributors with bank notes that could be circulated and used for payment, and was also a credit institution which used its retained share capital to pay out on commercial securities and give out loan advances to debtors. All this meant that the circulation of paper money, payments and exchange through various paper documents, and the level of credit in the financial system increased exponentially.[39] These banking innovations were accompanied by a

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[34] For the South Sea Bubble crisis, see P.G.M. Dickson, *The Financial Revolution in England: A Study in the Development of Public Credit, 1688-1756* (London: Macmillan, 1967), 90-156.
[35] Jane Milling, introduction to *The Basset Table*, by Susanna Centlivre (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview, 2009), 15.
[36] Tosney, 'Legacies,' 350-1.
[37] Ibid., 350.
[38] See Dickson, *Financial Revolution,* 54-57.
[39] Colin Nicholson, *Writing and the Rise of Finance: Capital Satires of the Early Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 6.

significantly expanded stock market, public and private lotteries, and insurance industry. The English state lottery reintroduced in 1694 to raise public funds proved a massive success and eventually became an annual institution.[40] The concurrent expansion of overseas trade to distant corners of the globe underpinned the growth of insurance companies to mitigate the risks of shipwrecks, fire and premature deaths.[41] The 1690s also witnessed a boom in what Defoe describes as 'the art and mystery of projecting'[42] – 'projectors' or investment schemes open to the public expanded in number from fewer than 15 companies in 1688, to more than 150 by 1695.[43] The great business flotations of the 1690s stimulated a massive influx of 'tellers, scriveners and stockjobbers', and stock trading and an emergent futures market became the work of coffee-houses and Exchange Alley.[44] The boom in the stock market reflected 'a wave of speculative excitement fed by the liberation of risk capital and the example set by a few exceptionally lucrative stocks'.[45] These revolutionary changes in the capital market and banking system provided greater opportunities for financial speculation and investments in paper and other non-landed property; credit-based negotiable paper proliferated in the form of stocks, bills of exchange and letters of credit. As John Brewer points out, '[t]he entire credit system engendered a highly speculative and volatile economy, full of enterprise and initiative, open to an extraordinary degree to the vagaries of fashion and fad'.[46]

In the feverish climate of a credit boom and speculative circulation of money, the symbolic link between gambling and economic speculation by investors was marked and pervasive.[47] The hero of Farquhar's *Sir Harry Wildair* (1701) parallels the gambling at court with the circulation of money in the city: 'the Money at Court circulates more by the Basset-Bank, than the Wealth of Merchants by

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[40] Jessica Richard, *The Romance of Gambling in the Eighteenth-Century British Novel* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 21.
[41] Nicholson, *Capital Satires*, 12.
[42] Daniel Defoe, *An Essay Upon Projects* (London, 1697), 25.
[43] Henry Roseveare, *The Financial Revolution, 1660-1760* (London: Longman, 1991), 42.
[44] Nicholson, *Capital Satires*, 15.
[45] Roseveare, *Financial Revolution,* 43.
[46] John Brewer, 'Commercialization and Politics,' in *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-century England*, eds. Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and J.H. Plumb (London: Europa, 1982), 213.
[47] See James Peck, 'Anne Oldfield's Lady Townly: Consumption, Credit, and the Whig Hegemony of the 1720s,' *Theatre Journal* 49.4 (1997): 407.

the Bank of the City'.[48] The stock market was often considered a form of gambling, and stockjobbers and brokers seemed interchangeable with gaming 'Sharpers and Setters'; as Defoe observes: 'Stock-jobbing is Play; a Box and Dice may be less dangerous, the Nature of them are alike, a Hazard […] are there fewer Sharpers and Setters in Exchange-Alley than at the Groom Porters?'[49] The Tory Alexander Pope attacked the perceived risks and corruption of the nascent credit economy by satirizing the fashionable card game, Quadrille, as 'the nation's last great trade'.[50] The frenzied investors of the notorious South Sea scheme were often compared to frivolous gamblers; in the fall-out after the collapse of the company, Henry St John draws parallels between the dangers of stockjobbing and gaming:

> I am sensible that the Spirit of *Stockjobbing*, like the itch of *all other Gaming*, is very hard to be cured; though the Persons posses'd of it are ever so fully convinced that They have to deal with *Sharpers*, who *look over their Cards*, or play with *false Dice*. It happens to *this Vice*, as it does to many others.[51]

In the signifying network that links gaming to the speculative elements of finance capitalism, the critique of gaming of the period can be seen to articulate the anxiety about credit and speculation upon which the new economy was based. But the link between gambling and finance capitalism was not only analogous. As Jessica Richard convincingly demonstrates, the 'financial revolution' had deep foundations in gambling because a major founding instrument of the National Debt was the state lottery.[52] The enormously successful 'Million Lottery' of 1694 was the first example of large-scale public borrowing in the country, instigated as a means of raising public debt to finance William's European Wars.[53] Steele describes the crush of eager lottery subscribers at Cheapside: the 'Crowds of People turning down towards the *Bank* and struggling who should get their Money

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[48] George Farquhar, *Sir Harry Wildair*, in *Works*, 1:266.
[49] Daniel Defoe, *An Anatomy of Exchange Alley* [etc] (London, 1719), 43-44.
[50] Alexander Pope, *Epistle to Bathurst*, in *Epistles to Several Persons (Moral Essays)*, ed. F. W. Bateson, vol. 3.2 of *The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope*, ed. John Butt and others (London: Methuen; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939-69), 89.
[51] Henry St John, *Craftsman* 288 (January 8, 1731-2) in *The Craftsman* (London, 1731-7), 8:267.
[52] For the lottery's key contribution to the development of early finance capitalism, see Richard, *Romance*, 18-31.
[53] The Bill for the Million Lottery was passed in April 1694, a month before Parliament assented to the establishment of the Bank of England; Dickson, *Financial Revolution,* 54.

into the newly-erected Lottery'.[54] Significantly, the head-manager appointed to run the National Lottery scheme was Thomas Neale, the 'Groom-Porter' who supervised gambling at the courts of Charles II and William III. The expanded role of this ex-courtier not only reflects the transformation of gambling from an elite to a popular activity, but underscores the central role of gambling in the evolution of public credit.[55] Lotteries emerged as one of the most reliable forms of raising public revenue in the period; there were 170 state lotteries between 1694-1826, which capitalized on the public appetite for speculation and investment. Indeed, it was the speculative ventures of the lotteries that led directly to the notorious South Sea scheme of 1720: when government tax revenues proved inadequate to cover the annual payments to lottery participants, the South Sea company was set up to give the annuitants the opportunity to trade in their lottery claims for shares in the company instead.[56] The exchange of lottery tickets and share subscription meant that gambling and investment procedures became increasingly indistinguishable. Stockjobbers became involved in both types of transactions as dramatized in Centlivre's *A Bold Stroke for a Wife*; lottery tickets were often subdivided and sold onwards, mimicking the trading patterns of equity and bonds. Whilst Centlivre's gaming plays focus on gaming with cards and dice, all these speculative ventures – lotteries, share trading, gaming – drew upon the same popular surge in risk-taking which underpinned the speculative credit culture. Catherine Ingrassia explains the link between gambling and early finance capitalism: gambling and speculation inform materially and symbolically the driving forces of finance capitalism and the new credit economy.[57]

Critics have tended to dismiss the moral reforms in Centlivre's *The Gamester*, by pointing to the powerfully appealing dramatization of gambling in the play. As Milling argues: 'the seductive compulsion of gaming [is] presented with theatrical delight' and the 'gaming characters are most

[54] Richard Steele, *Tatler* 124 (January 24, 1710) in *The Tatler,* ed. Donald F. Bond (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), 2:229.
[55] See Richard, *Romance*, 20.
[56] Ibid., 21-22.
[57] Catherine Ingrassia, *Authorship, Commerce and Gender in Early Eighteenth-Century England: A Culture of Paper Credit* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 6-7. Ingrassia's thesis argues for the symbolic and material connections between the driving forces of Exchange Alley and print culture or 'Grub Street'.

performatively appealing'.[58] Centlivre's depiction of the excitement of gambling culture captures the speculative, risk-taking spirit of her time, which fuelled an emergent finance capitalist system predicated on money and chance. The critique of gambling in *The Gamester* situates Centlivre in the increasingly moralist theatrical climate of her time; it also enables her to interrogate the complexities of a new commercial culture and its underlying social and financial anxieties.

As Pocock has shown, the advent of finance capitalism produced cultural anxieties, rekindling the debate between 'landed interests' and 'monied interests' and instigating an ongoing controversy between 'virtue' and 'corruption'.[59] Faced with the potential erosion of their cultural dominance, Tory commentators aligned with 'landed interests' resurrected the neo-Harringtonian model of the landed gentleman who is rendered independent and autonomous (in effect 'virtuous') by his ownership of property, as opposed to a more corruptible 'monied' citizen, perceived as indulging his desires and 'wrestling with his own passions and hysterias […] let loose by his fantasies and appetites'.[60] This Tory-Country discourse sets the stable, rational figure of the landed gentleman, the 'patriot' ideal, against the 'new economic man' devoted to speculative financial activities and seen as corrupted by 'a disordered and unstable milieu defined by paper credit, volatile signifiers, and increasingly immobile forms of property'.[61] In 1701, Lord Ashburnham asserts the patriotic virtues of the landed interest: 'whenever England comes to be settled and made happy it must be done by councils of such who love their country and value their estates beyond any thing else of any consideration whatsoever'.[62] Another contemporary commentator lauds the qualities of a landed gentleman: 'Possessed of a good estate… [he] did not lie open to the temptations that might bias persons who had their fortunes to make against the interest of their country'.[63] The Tory *Examiner* argues for the superiority of the landed classes who 'have their Lands at stake for their Probity and Honour', in

[58] Milling, introduction, 21.
[59] Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, 436-61.
[60] Ingrassia, *Paper Credit*, 3.
[61] Ibid., 21.
[62] Ashburnham to John Rowe, 5 December 1701; quoted in Geoffrey Holmes, *British Politics in the Age of Anne*, rev. ed. (London; Ronceverte: Hambledon, 1987), 163, n484.
[63] This refers to a parliamentary speech by Harry Mordaunt in 1708; see William Cobbett, *Cobbett's Parliamentary History of England: From the Norman Conquest, in 1066, to the Year 1803* (London, 1811), 6:744.

comparison with the monied interest who are perceived to only have an estate 'as Actions rise or fall'.[64]

The Whiggish response to this ideological debate required an alternative image of personality – one endowed with values and characteristics that stabilized the hysteria and passions associated with financial speculation, and in the face of accusations of corruption, asserted the virtues of a commercial modernity. As Pocock puts it: 'if speculative man was not to be the slave of his passions, he had to moderate these by converting them into opinion, experience and interest, and into a system of social ties which these things reinforced'.[65] This appropriate 'system of social ties' took the form of a new commercial ideology, in which the virtues of sociability substituted civic virtue, and merged commercial values to those of politeness and restraint. Whig intellects and ideologues including Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third Earl of Shaftesbury; Addison; Steele; and Defoe were all acutely engaged in crafting 'a distinctive language of moral and social personality, which offered a Whiggish politics of manners'.[66] As Pocock has long noted, Whig propagandists evoked the unstable forces of finance capitalism in the feminised image of a fitful, unpredictable 'Lady Credit'.[67] Defoe, for example, applied to stabilize the perceived passion and hysteria associated with financial speculation by converting Credit into Opinion. In his personification of Lady Credit as an emblem of commercial society, Defoe links Credit with two complementary sets of virtues. Credit is the child of Probity and Prudence (a set of pragmatic virtues); Credit's cousin is Reputation, who is the child of Virtue and Wisdom (representing the more familiar moral virtues).[68] This allegorical family posits a new conception of virtue for a commercial society, in the fundamental relationship between credit and reputation and its essential foundations in integrity and judgment.[69] In another portrayal of Credit as a fickle but desirable maiden, Defoe describes Credit's ideal suitor as one who personifies the

[64] *Examiner* 10 (September 28 – October 10, 1710).
[65] Pocock, *Virtue*, 115.
[66] Klein, 'Politeness,' 221.
[67] Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, 453.
[68] See Daniel Defoe, *A Review of the State of the British Nation* 55 (August 1, 1710) in *Defoe's Review*, ed. John McVeagh, vol.7, part 1 (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2009), 270-3. For Defoe's imaging of credit, see Paula R. Backscheider, 'Defoe's Lady Credit,' *Huntington Library Quarterly* 44, no. 1 (Spring 1981): 89-100. See too Addison's famous allegory of Lady Credit; Joseph Addison, *Spectator* 3 (March 3, 1711) in *Spectator*, 1:14-17.
[69] Backscheider, 'Credit,' 90.

values of a new commercial society: 'A Young Man full of Application, sober, sensible, and honest, that lays his Bones to his Work, and his Head to his Business'.[70] Amongst the most influential arbiters of politeness and commercial virtues were the popular periodicals, *The Tatler* (1709-11) and *The Spectator* (1711-12), by Addison and Centlivre's friend and theatrical colleague, Steele. As Klein has shown, these periodicals interrogated the distinction between landed and monied interests 'while setting it in a new framework that undermined Tory arguments'.[71] Addison and Steele promoted the virtues of sociability and harmony as imperative to a modern commercial world: '[t]he frequent exhortations in *The Spectator* to modesty, discretion, decorum, propriety, and politeness were demands that the moral agent recognize the social context of his or her actions and so integrate self and others, parts and whole'.[72] A key concern of these Whig moralists was the refinement of passion, seen as crucial to social and moral development. As Steele contends: 'The entire Conquest of our Passions is so difficult a Work, that they who despair of it should think of a less difficult Task, and only attempt to Regulate them. But there is a third thing which may contribute not only to the Ease, but also to the Pleasure of our Life; and that is, refining our Passions to a greater Elegance, than we receive them from Nature'.[73]

Centlivre's significant intervention in what Klein describes as the Whig 'politics of personal traits' is made, I argue, by interrogating and asserting a transformation of values to defend a new economy of credit and exchange.[74] *The Gamester*'s focus on gaming depicts the energizing as well as destabilizing impact of speculation; the moral impetus of the play provides a new articulation of morality for a commercial society, one that restrains the corrupting influence of money and contains the radical instability of a speculative economy. Most strikingly, Centlivre invests moral agency in her heroine Angelica, the morally upright and financially savvy 'monied' heiress, to underscore the role and significance of women in an emergent credit economy.

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[70] Daniel Defoe, *A Review of the State of the British Nation* 57 (August 5, 1710) in *Defoe's Review*, vol.7, part 1, 279.
[71] Klein, 'Politeness,' 223.
[72] Ibid., 228.
[73] Richard Steele, *Spectator* 71 (May 22, 1711) in *Spectator*, 1:304.
[74] Klein, 'Politeness,' 220.

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In *The Gamester*, the figure of Valere, the 'unconquer'd Rambler' (p.47), presents all the symptoms of instability and emotional disorder associated with the compulsive gambler of popular contemporary descriptions. As Charles Cotton explains:

> Gaming is an enchanting witchery, gotten betwixt Idleness and Avarice […] It hath this ill property above all Vices, that it renders a man incapable of prosecuting any serious action, and makes him always unsatisfied with his own condition; he is either lifted up to the top of mad joy with success or plung'd to the bottom of despair by misfortune, always in extream, always in a storm.[75]

Valere is trapped in the 'witchery' of gambling: 'he is at shaking his Elbows over a Table; saying his Prayers backwards' (p.1). Gambling is an obsession so powerful it governs his waking and sleeping hours: 'tis impossible to sleep: For I can no sooner shut my Eyes, but methinks an Evil Genius flings Amm's Ace before me' (p.4). Valere's household is one in total disorder with an inversion of day and night, as when his servants wait endlessly until 'broad Day-light' (p.1) when he returns from the gaming house. He himself is often dishevelled and in physical disorder; his appearance on returning from the gaming house is described by Favourite, Angelica's outspoken maid: 'Behold his Picture […] with Arms a cross, downcast Eyes, no Powder in his Periwig; a Steenkirk tuck'd in to hide the Dirt. Sword-knot unty'd, no Gloves, and Hands and Face dirt as a Tinker' (p.3).

Valere is volatile and temperamental and his mood swings are as changeable as the weather, governed by the extent of his gaming wins or losses. As his manservant Hector points out: if he returns 'home with an empty Pocket […] then will he be confoundedly out of Humour' (p.1) and his 'fob, like a Barometer, shews the Temper of [his] Heart, as that does the Weather.' (p.5). The hysteria associated with gambling is similarly dramatized in contemporary plays, for example, Farquhar's *Sir Harry Wildair*, in which the losing gamesters, Lady Lurewell and Captain Fireball, are seen '*tearing their Cards, and flinging 'em about the Room*'.[76] Yet Valere's volatility also embodies the unstable economy of finance capitalism – his erratic temperament and passionate mood swings conform to critiques of the speculative man as one who gives free rein to his passions and is

[75] Cotton, *Compleat Gamester*, 2-3.
[76] Farquhar, *Works,* 274.

susceptible to the frenzy of speculation which manifests as a form of hysteria.[77] After a good day's winnings, Valere launches into a soliloquy on a gambler's happy lot:

> Who's happier than a Gamester, who more respected, I mean those that make any Figure in the World? Who more carest by Lords and Dukes? […] In short there is an Air of Magnificence in't, a Gamester's hand is the Philosopher's Stone that turns all it touches into Gold. (p.36)

Shortly after this scene, Valere suffers his most extreme gambling losses and he plunges into the depths of despair, declaring he has lost the will to live: 'No, I'll neither hear, nor see, nor eat, nor drink, no ever rest again' (p.57). Albeit in a comical way, Valere the speculator is depicted as near hysterical and frenzied by the unstable cycle of success and failures. Buoyed by his winnings, he indulges in appetitive fantasies of speculation, dreaming about tapping into a source of infinite riches. The downward cycle of loss, however, destabilizes him further, when he displays melodramatic suicidal tendencies.

Valere belongs to an established landed family; his father, Sir Thomas, reminds him of their forebears and family estate: 'quit the Name of your ancestors, who never yet produc'd such a Profligate. The Estate has not been reserve'd for so long in the Family to be thrown away at Hazard' (pp.6-7). Valere emerges as a scion of the landed class whose indulgence in reckless speculation is a 'ruin to his Fame and Fortune' (p.15) and endangers the future of his family's landed estate. Angelica, the object of his love, however, is an heiress from the 'monied' class: her '[f]ortune being all ready Money' (p.17). Despite the apparent differences in social class, Sir Thomas wholeheartedly approves of Angelica; indeed, his endorsement of his son is contingent on his ability to secure her as a bride: 'I know your Love, and the only thing I like in you: She's a Virtuous Lady, and her Fortune's large […] Well Son, if you obtain her, I'll forgive your Faults' (p.7). Sir Thomas' endorsement of Angelica eschews a straightforward opposition between the landed and monied classes, and is instead grounded in his perception of her virtues. Angelica's 'virtue' is strikingly linked to her solvency – 'She's a Virtuous Lady, and her Fortune's large' – and as we shall see, to her capable management of her estate's mobile assets. Political readings of Centlivre's plays have tended to

[77] See Pocock, *Virtue*, 114.

highlight the role of 'blocking agents' – tyrannical fathers or guardians who prevent the young lovers' courtship – as a sign of Centlivre's rejection of Tory patriarchalism in favour of a 'Whiggish' freely contracted marriage.[78] In this case, however, Valere's father is supportive of his courtship of Angelica, signalling a different aspect of Whig progressive politics: Sir Thomas' appreciation of Angelica's solvent position and commendable commercial virtues. Angelica's qualities are also suggested by her name: 'angel' is both the godly spiritual being and a gold coin (fashioned after the French *angelot*) last minted in the reign of Charles I. Thus Angelica embodies both exemplary virtue and material wealth, underscoring the message that her virtue is inextricably linked to her solvency. Critics have tended to associate the figure of Angelica with Angellica Bianca, the sexually liberated courtesan of Behn's *The Rover* (1677).[79] Yet *The Gamester*'s monied heiress probably has more in common with the heroine of a more contemporary play, Congreve's *Love for Love* (1695). Just as Centlivre's Angelica effects the reform of the inveterate gambler, Valere, Congreve's comedy features a wealthy heiress, also named Angelica, whose stratagems succeed in rehabilitating the profligate rake, Valentine.

In *The Gamester*, Angelica and her sister, Lady Wealthy, played by the customarily paired and celebrated actresses, Anne Bracegirdle (Angelica) and Elizabeth Barry (Wealthy), are rivals for Valere's affections. Whilst in Regnard's original, La Comtesse is a minor figure, Centlivre expands the role of Lady Wealthy as well as adding that of her suitor, Lovewell, to create a distinct subplot, in line with the comedic tradition of contrasting a gay and a sober couple. Yet the expanded role of Lady Wealthy also enables Centlivre to dramatize two women's contrasting attitudes towards love and money. The two sisters are positioned antithetically, both in the ways in which they pursue their courtship of Valere and in their respective attitudes towards the ownership and management of money. For Lady Wealthy, money denotes sexual power and material possession devoid of moral principles. She is the rich 'widow of my *Lord Wealthy*' (p.6), with a fortune described as greater than Angelica's. Unlike Angelica's solvent wealth, however, we are told that Lady Wealthy's 'estate [is]

[78] See for example, Sonia Villegas López, 'Transgression and After: Fathers and Daughters in Susanna Centlivre's *The Busybody*,' *SEDERI: Yearbook of the Spanish and Portuguese Society for English Renaissance Studies* 8 (1997): 141-45.
[79] See for example, Warren, 'Gender,' 624.

Intail'd' (p.17), implying that she had inherited a legally entailed estate from her late husband (probably comprising landed and real property that she cannot dispose of nor alienate), which augments her own family fortune. Lady Wealthy represents a merging of landed and monied interests, such as the one that Sir Thomas is eager to obtain with his son and Angelica's planned union. Both sisters compete for Valere's love, and Lady Wealthy's debate on their respective suitability reveals a cynical yet rational understanding of wealth and speculation. Angelica, she argues, would be bankrupted by marriage to an inveterate gambler: 'your Fortune being all ready Money will be thrown off with Expedition' (p.17). In contrast, Wealthy's own entailed estate, she explains, is legally protected from the worst of Valere's profligacy: 'Our Circumstances are different – My Estate's Intail'd enough to supply his Riots, and why should I not bestow it upon the Man I like?' (p.17).

Angelica and her sister conduct their courtship of Valere in starkly different ways. Lady Wealthy (whose admirer, Lovewell, is a close friend of Valere's) tries to 'purchase' Valere's love by offering him a 'Bill for One Hundred Pounds payable at sight' (p.44). The bill is a 'promisory note' of payment, one of the many forms of paper credit that proliferated in the 'financial revolution' of the 1690s. The legitimacy of a bill is reliant on the issuer's credit-worthiness, and Valere's eagerness to accept Lady Wealthy's paper reflects her fiscal standing. Lady Wealthy underscores her financial muscle and perceived power over Valere in an allusion to Jove in her signing of the bill: 'I confirm my words in a Golden showr' (p.44). Lady Wealthy's financial standing is grounded in her status as an independently wealthy widow; rich, confident and sexually aggressive, she is *The Gamester*'s female equivalent of the rake. Yet she is also a composite figure: a sexually predatory rake endowed with a wealthy inheritance, part-landed and part-monied, and who displays the worst aspects of unethical 'Cit' materialism.

Valere, who is sorely in need of money to fund his gambling debts, agonizes over whether to accept Lady Wealthy's money: 'What must I do now? prove a Rogue, and betray my Friend Lovewell…But then Angelica, the faithful Maid – But then a Hundred Guineas, the dear tempting Sight!' (p.44). Valere's predicament suggests the problematic values of an increasingly

commercialized society in the competing demands of loyalty (to a friend), fidelity (to a lover) and the lure of speculative gains. Lady Wealthy's attempt to 'purchase' Valere's affections reflects the limits of a purely commercial ethos and the inherent corruption in a commercial system of exchange and 'Consideration': 'when a Widow parts with Money, 'tis easie to read the valuable Consideration she expects' (p.44). Valere is severely tempted by Wealthy's money and his dilemma is only resolved by the sudden arrival of Lovewell: 'Ha! *Lovewell*, thou com'st in good time, for my Virtue's staggering' (p.44). Valere is keenly aware of the sexual favours that Lady Wealthy expects in return for her monetary gift: 'If I accept this present, I must make my returns in Love' (p.44). Centlivre inverts contemporary critiques of the female gamester in which the female gambler is seen as staking her sexual virtue at the gaming table. This is embodied, for example, by Farquhar's Lady Lurewell of *Sir Harry Wildair*, who is so consumed by gambling that she promises Sir Harry sexual favours in return for gambling funds. In Centlivre's play, male gamblers are depicted as equally vulnerable to sexual commodification, as in the case of Valere, whose obsession with gambling puts him at risk of a form of prostitution.

In contrast to her sister, Angelica is genuinely in love with Valere and will only continue their relationship if he forsakes his damaging vice: 'banish your Love for Play, and rest secur'd of mine' (p.25). Thus whilst Lady Wealthy preys on Valere's reckless speculative urges, Angelica seeks to reform Valere of his vice and hence transform him into a worthy future husband and manager of her solvent inheritance. In a crucial scene, Angelica gives Valere a diamond-studded miniature of herself as a test of his love for her and his resolve to renounce gambling, charging him to keep it on pain of losing her hand in marriage. This striking representation of Angelica as a portrait 'set round with Gems of Inestimable value' (p.49), evokes her as a valuable material asset. As Favourite points out – 'Tis worth Two hundred Pounds, a good Moveable, when Cash runs low' (p.25) – clearly referring to its value as a mobile, non-landed property easily convertible into liquid assets. The portrait, then, symbolizes not only Angelica herself but her identity as an heiress of an estate rich with monied assets. The test of Valere's 'guardianship' of the portrait, to 'keep safe this Picture' (p.25), is thus a test of his ability to be a suitable partner to such an heiress and an effective guardian of her estate.

Angelica's portrait is symbolic of both her person and her solvent wealth, and the latter is inalienable from her own identity. This is underscored when Valere later loses the portrait at the gaming table to Angelica herself in disguise; he tries to separate the gems from the painting of Angelica but this proves an impossibility. The painting is a symbol of Angelica, her love, her hand in marriage, and her valuable inheritance, all of which are inseparable and need to be preserved at all cost. We recall Sir Thomas' admiring description of Angelica as a figure who combines virtue and solvency: 'She's a Virtuous Lady, and her Fortune's large' (p.7). Angelica warns Valere: 'whilst you keep safe this Picture, my Heart is yours – but if thro' Avarice, Carelessness, or Falsehood, you ever part with it, you lose me from that moment' (p.25). The sins of 'Avarice, Carelessness, or Falsehood' (as opposed to the hallmarks of a Whiggish man of commerce who is prudent, honourable, and reliable) clearly signify corruption of the highest order, whilst the preservation of a solvent asset is a mark of worth and 'virtue' deserving of Angelica's love.

For most of the play, however, Valere's compulsion for gaming reduces him to a Whiggish nightmare of economic mismanagement. As Valere admits, his excessive gambling has degraded him '[t]o become the Scoff of Mercenary Wretches – and thro' my own mismanagement, reduc'd to base Necessity' (p.14). But Valere's financial recklessness also has a wider impact on other members of the interconnecting and circulatory network of commerce, credit and speculation carefully depicted by Centlivre in the play. *The Gamester* emphasizes the importance of reliable promises and the fulfilment of obligations in the context of a new commercial society dependent on paper credit and monetary obligations. As Peter Mathias explains, paper credit and bills of exchange underpinned the operations of eighteenth-century businesses thanks to 'the web of credit supporting business'.[80] Defoe estimates that two-thirds of English tradesmen's business was conducted by credit, contending that 'credit is so much a tradesman's blessing, that 'tis the choicest ware he deals with'.[81] For Valere's merchants, however, credit is a blight rather than a blessing. Valere's insolvency inflicts financial misery on the long-suffering tradespeople to whom he is indebted: Mrs Topknot, the

[80] Peter Mathias, *The Transformation of England: Essays in the Economic and Social History of England in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Methuen, 1979), 95.
[81] Daniel Defoe, *The Complete English Tradesman* [etc] (London, 1726), 225.

milliner, requires money for her daughter's dowry 'to be paid down the Nail' (p.33); Galloon, Valere's tailor, needs his debt repaid in order to purchase coal for his wife's lying in: 'Coals are very dear – and Journey mens wages must be paid' (p.34). Valere's failure to fulfil his financial contracts restricts the scope and activities of others, and disqualifies him from partaking in the modern system of commerce and credit.[82] This is underscored when Valere attempts to secure an uncollateralised loan from a pawnbroker, the widowed Mrs Security. Despite his charm and flattery, she flatly refuses his promise on paper, exposing his total lack of financial credibility. As Valere's manservant, Hector, humorously observes: 'my Master's Note is as good as a Banker's – sometimes, when the Dice run well' (p.13). Valere's 'honour', which is based on the turn of the dice, is clearly worthless. Mrs Security is another hint of Centlivre's interest in the figure of a financially discerning woman. Mrs Security exercises the virtue of prudence in refusing Valere's loan, rejecting his pledge on paper to insist on adequate collateral of real property: 'If it be not quite double the value, I won't stand with a Friend' (p.13). She also emerges as a person who is true to her word; as she reminds Valere, she had safely returned his ring pledged for a previous loan. Most significantly, through her prudent business practises and 'fair dealing[s]' (p.13), she honours her 'promise' to her late husband 'to be wary of the Money he left [her]' (p.13).

Valere, however, displays a total lack of creditworthiness – a function of his continuing failure to fulfil his monetary obligations, which in turn signifies his lack of virtue and moral worth. In contrast to early Restoration drama in which libertine rakes are endowed with the 'virtues' of personal magnetism and sexual potency inhered in their persons, Valere's charm and sexuality, which failed to persuade Mrs Security, are worthless as a currency without a reputation as a man who fulfils his financial and moral obligations.[83] Instead, virtue in *The Gamester* is closely linked to a reputation which guarantees credibility and solvency, crucial notions in a mercantile credit society. As urged by Defoe: men should behave in such ways as to give one another good grounds for believing that

[82] For how Valere's financial negligence is symptomatic of his lack of 'bourgeois inner worth', see Anderson, *Female Playwrights*, 113-4.

[83] For the ways in which Cavalier potency reflects arbitrary political power, see Richard Braverman, 'The *Rake's Progress* Revisited: Politics and Comedy in the Restoration,' in Canfield and Payne, *Cultural Readings*, 141-68.

promises would be performed and expectations fulfilled. Defoe's imaging of Lady Credit articulates the qualities required of a reformed credit economy: 'if you will entertain this Virgin, you must act upon the nice Principles of Honour, and Justice […] you must answer all Demands, with a Respect to the Solemnity, and Value of the Engagement'.[84] John Dunton, the eighteenth-century Whig publisher, describes the attributes of a virtuous man of business: reliability – 'to all his promises there needs no other bond but his word'; polite affability – 'piety, good humour…a plain dealer'; and the ability to 'keep up your reputation' and 'preserve your integrity'.[85] Angelica understands the importance of honouring one's obligations, and her condemnation of Valere articulates this Whiggish conception of virtue: 'a Man who basely breaks his Word, and forfeits Faith and Honour […] deserves to be despised' (p.24). Centlivre refashions virtue to incorporate such values as reputation and credit, so important to the 'new economic man'. As Richard Steele was to later observe: credit is to the Trader 'what Honour […] Fame, or Glory is to other Sort of men'.[86]

It is the virtuous and solvent Angelica who serves as the play's moral agent and Valere's final reclamation is effected by her redeeming love, forgiveness and moral example. However, Angelica's moral example is unusual. Angelica departs from the passive models of female virtue depicted in the reform comedies of Centlivre's male contemporaries, usually incorporating the stock formula of a long-suffering, morally superior wife reclaiming her philandering husband. In Cibber's *The Careless Husband*, the rakish Sir Charles Easy is reformed by the example of his wife's generous response to her discovery of his affair. By contrast, Angelica is an active moral agent who understands and partakes in the complex commercial and speculative networks depicted in the play. Angelica is conversant with the notions of credit and trust, as when she turns down credit from a stranger in the gaming house: 'I beg your Pardon, Sir, I never play upon Honour with Strangers' (p.55). She understands the significance of honouring contractual obligations in a monetary system of values and exploits them herself, as when she disabuses Valere's lie about her painting which he has

[84] Daniel Defoe, *A Review of the State of the British Nation* 116 (Dec 21, 1710) in *Defoe's Review,* vol. 7, part 2, 529-30.
[85] Quoted in C.H. Timperley, *Encyclopædia of Literary and Typographical Anecdote* (London, 1842), 629-33.
[86] Richard Steele, *Spectator* 509 (October 14, 1712) in *Spectator*, 4:309.

gambled away and confronts and shames him with the original: 'When a Man breaks all his Oaths to me, I know no reason I shou'd keep my Word with him' (p.65).

Most strikingly, Angelica dons men's clothes and takes part at the gaming table, proving herself a skilful and deft player who outplays the gaming 'sharper', Cogdie (p.54), and wins back her own valuable portrait from Valere. In this scene at the gaming house, an entirely original scene not found in Regnard's play, Centlivre depicts the excitement of a game in full swing: the gaming table is surrounded by 'Valere, Count Cogdie, and other Gentlemen at Hazard, with several Rakes and Sharpers' (p.50). In contrast to the disruptive behaviour of the other players – 'Cogdie sits disordered' (p.53), and Valere picks a fight to accuse a player of cheating (p.51) – Angelica is composed and level-headed. Unlike Valere who is compulsively drawn to gambling, Angelica enters the game of credit and speculation with reason and purpose; by winning back her own portrait before Valere has the chance to stake it to other 'sharpers', she ensures that the painting, a symbol of her person, her love and her solvent wealth is preserved from external hands. As Valere hints at the conclusion of the play when he discovers the identity of the player who won the portrait: 'Then I did not break my Oath entirely, you were excepted, Madam' (p.67).

In the figure of Angelica, Centlivre depicts a woman playing the speculative exchange game with skill and ability, and most significantly, whilst keeping her passions under control. Angelica's actions on the gaming table invert popular contemporary depictions of the female gamester as avaricious and morally suspect, a theme I explore further in my reading of *The Basset Table.* In *The Gamester,* Angelica's financial autonomy can be seen to reflect the enabling impact of the new credit economy which granted women a degree of economic agency in the early eighteenth century. As Ann Carlos and Larry Neal observe: 'The capital market […] provided another avenue for women to earn money – not just from the passive receipt of dividends but also from the active management of their money and the potential for capital gains'.[87] Women could legally act in Exchange Alley, purchasing stocks, government funds, lottery tickets and insurance policies – all forms of speculative

[87] Ann M. Carlos and Larry Neal, 'Women investors in early capital markets, 1720-1725,' *Financial History Review* 11, no. 2 (2004): 202.

investments.[88] As a wealthy heiress of a monied estate, and an unmarried woman with an independent legal identity, Angelica is well placed to embark on speculative ventures. Single adult women, both spinsters and widows, were governed by the doctrine of *feme sole*, which granted them their own independent legal identity, enabling them to own property, enter into legal contracts and trade independently. By contrast, the property rights of a married woman were strictly circumscribed. As a *feme covert*, a married woman had no independent legal identity: she could not own property, nor sue or be sued, and the personal and real property she owned became her husband's upon marriage.[89] Yet married women too could engage in speculative investments, because the law enabled them to act as *feme sole* in the trading of financial instruments, as long as these were purchased from their personal allowance or 'pin money', or other forms of personal property.[90] Stocks and shares often formed a significant component of women's jointure because unlike land or property, stocks were not taxable and were a form of assets married women could maintain as their personal estate.[91] Women of the upper and middling classes had a marked and significant presence in Exchange Alley, at a time when the latter was still a largely undefined and penetrable space.[92] Between 1690 and 1740, women accounted for twenty percent of the stockholdings in annuities, bank funds, and other major companies such as the East India or South Sea Company.[93] The largest single shareholding in the Bank of England was held by the Whig grandee, Sarah Churchill, the Duchess of Marlborough.[94] Centlivre herself was eager to participate in the market exchange in her poetic appeal for South Sea equity. Ingrassia argues that 'women's participation in speculative investment obscures the binary categories of public and private, or financial and domestic, as

[88] Ingrassia, *Paper Credit*, 31.
[89] Carlos and Neal, 'Women investors,' 200. It was possible however to circumvent the legal status of married women by the creation of a trust for a married woman to hold separate property.
[90] See Anderson, *Female Playwrights*, 109. By the end of the century, however, allowing married women such autonomy over their separate estates was found to be intolerable as subsequent legal judgments demonstrate; see Susan Staves, *Married Women's Separate Property in England, 1660-1833* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1990), 152.
[91] Ingrassia, *Paper Credit*, 30.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Dickson, *Financial Revolution*, 267.
[94] Ingrassia, *Paper Credit*, 32.

women insert themselves into a public financial space'.[95] Yet in *The Gamester*, Angelica's need to cross-dress and disguise her identity when assuming her place as a speculator on the gaming table is also suggestive of the provisional nature of women's economic roles. The 'carnivalesque' scene of the gaming house – where night becomes day, women dress as men, and social class and gender distinctions are blurred – empowers Angelica into asserting independent financial agency, albeit perhaps temporarily.

Angelica also functions as *The Gamester*'s moral compass; in the conclusion to the play, it is her moral example and forgiving love that reclaims Valere from the vice of gaming and rescues him from a life of penury and ruin. Sir Thomas' extreme financial measure of disinheriting his son shocks her, 'this Usage shocks me' (p.67), and moves her to pity: her 'Heart beats as if the Strings were breaking' (p.66). To this capable and solvent member of the monied class, it is Valere's impending financial ruin that seems to disturb her the most: 'Shall I see him ruin'd – no – that wou'd be barbarous beyond Example' (p.67). At the same time, Angelica displays compassion, an important virtue in the Whiggish ideological refinement of passion. *The Spectator*, for example, was to later assert compassion as an important passion and virtue: it serves to 'refine and civilize Human Nature' and therefore 'knits Mankind together, and blends them in the same common Lot'.[96] As Klein explains, politeness created 'a virtue of human plasticity […] for the Whig moralist, passions were the motor of human actions, human moral development depended largely on shaping the passions'.[97]

Angelica's compassion for Valere moves her to relent and she accepts him back on condition that he forsakes his 'former Follies' (p.67). Her generous and compassionate example encourages Sir Thomas to follow suit and forgive his errant son: 'Madam your Example is too good not to be follow'd – *Valere*, I forgive thee, and Confirm my first Design' (p.67). Angelica's forgiveness and Valere's promise to reform effect the marriage proposal and contract; as Angelica asks: 'Can you upon your Honour (for you shall swear no more) forsake that Vice that has brought you to this low

[95] Ibid., 20.
[96] Joseph Addison, *Spectator* 397 (June 5, 1712) in *Spectator*, 3:486.
[97] Klein, 'Politeness,' 229.

Ebb of Fortune' (p.67). The conclusion to *The Gamester* differs sharply from its source by Regnard, in which Valere is disinherited by his father and rejected by Angelique who gives her hand to another suitor. Centlivre's happy ending, whilst conforming to comedic norms, also enables her to foreground the value of compassion in ensuring virtue, stability and harmony in a reformed trading economy. Delighted by his son's impending marriage, Sir Thomas promises the couple 'a swinging Jointure' (p.65). The reference to a generous 'jointure' (a marriage settlement creating a provision of land or income for a wife on the decease of her husband) is indicative of a number of issues.[98] Sir Thomas is probably cognizant of the wealthy estate that Angelica is bringing to her union with Valere and the need to make her an equally liberal financial provision should she survive her husband. It may also reflect his faith in Angelica's superior financial acumen as a woman who will one day be able to independently manage an ample widow's estate. Yet the need for a marriage settlement is also a reminder that Angelica's marriage will circumscribe her property rights and financial agency, another gesture perhaps to the provisional nature of women's economic roles. Most significantly, Sir Thomas' generosity signals his wholehearted approval of the impending nuptials and renewed confidence in his son's future, which is grounded in Valere's union with a prudent, solvent and 'virtuous' member of the monied class.

The sanction of this landed gentleman is an endorsement by the traditional landed order of a merger with the monied class, predicated on the virtues and obligations of a new commercial system. Here Centlivre anticipates the thrust of the culture of politeness which promotes social and moral complementarity and dependence.[99] Addison's ideological work in his periodicals, for example, eschews a hostile opposition between landed and monied interests to assert the importance of mutual interdependence between the classes. His famous paean to trade in his account of the Royal Exchange celebrates trade and commerce as valuable new elements that will enhance the wealth of the landed interest, making 'our Landed Estates infinitely more Valuable than they were formerly, and added to them an Accession of other Estates as Valuable as the Lands

[98] For a discussion on jointure in the period, see Staves, *Married Women's*, 95-130.
[99] See Klein, 'Politeness,' 225.

themselves'.[100] In *The Spectator*, the upwardly mobile merchant turned gentleman, Sir Andrew Freeport, invokes the habits of the commercial mind (frugality, industriousness, fastidiousness) as virtues that the landed classes cannot afford to ignore: 'This is the Oeconomy of the Merchant, and the Conduct of the Gentleman must be the same'.[101] Similarly in *The Guardian*, we are given the example of a city merchant recently retired to the country, who makes vast improvements to his landed estate by applying new business practices to a rural economy.[102] In Centlivre's play, Sir Thomas can be considered a progressive version of Sir Roger de Coverley, a similarly landed gentleman who nevertheless appreciates the importance of financial solvency and commercial virtues.

The sub-plot in *The Gamester* – that of the courtship of Lady Wealthy by the morally upright Lovewell – underscores the theme of commercial virtues. Lady Wealthy's mercenary attitude to love and material wealth, and her overriding emphasis on selfish personal gain represent the corrupting influence of a purely mercantile ethos. The awkward revelation of her designs on Valere and the bill offered to him exposes her reputation to public ridicule: 'The World says you are in Love with him – 'Tis all the Discourse at the *Chocolate* House' (p.48). Her promissory note of payment signed with a flourish as a mark of her wealth and power over the impoverished Valere, is also exposed as a possible source of damage to her reputation. Steele alerts us to the intimate connection between Reputation and Credit: 'Credit is undone in Whispers' and 'an ill Word may change Plenty into Want'.[103] Women (and men), Centlvre's drama seems to suggest, can only successfully play the system of credit and exchange when adhering to the tenets of commercial virtues. Lady Wealthy's reputation is rescued by the actions of Lovewell, who selflessly claims her bill as his own, thus keeping her 'Honour free from all ill Tongues' (p.60). Like Angelica, Lovewell displays the important virtue of compassion. His generous and compassionate actions stimulate a marked change in Lady Wealthy and 'shocks' her into repentance and reform: 'This generosity shocks me' (p.60). She now

[100] Joseph Addison, *Spectator* 69 (May 19, 1711) in *Spectator,* 1:296.
[101] Richard Steele, *Spectator* 174 (September 19, 1711) in *Spectator*, 2:188.
[102] See *Guardian* 9 (March 21, 1713) in *The Guardian*, ed. John Calhoun Stephens (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1982), 66-69.
[103] Richard Steele, *Spectator* 218 (November 9, 1711) in *Spectator*, 2:350.

understands that personal gain and material ambition alone are inadequate schemes of value without the important notions of honour and trust. She finally recognizes these virtues in her loyal, long-suffering suitor, Lovewell, and accepts his suit of marriage: 'And if I cou'd persuade myself to trust a Man, I think it wou'd be you' (p.60). Lady Wealthy's erstwhile blindness to her own malicious behaviour and to the virtues embodied in the upright Lovewell, echoes and anticipates Addison's warning in *The Spectator*: 'When Mens Thoughts are taken up with Avarice and Ambition, they cannot look upon any thing as great or valuable, which does not bring with it an extraordinary Power or Interest to the Person who is concerned in it'.[104] A quotation from Seneca in Centlivre's play ventriloquized by the irrepressible Hector carries a strikingly similar warning: 'What is the end of Ambition and Avarice, we are but Stewarts of what we falsely call our own. All those things which we pursue with so much hazard, for which we break Faith and Friendship, what are they but the mere depositor of Fortune' (p.58).

In *The Gamester*, Centlivre dramatizes both the exhilarating and destabilizing impact of excessive speculation. The play's moral imperative is invested in the figure of Angelica, whose reforms are concerned with the refinement and transvaluation of passion. Whilst she is enabled and empowered by the spaces opened up in a new commercial economy, Angelica eschews the excessive passions associated with gambling and speculation. She moderates her passions to show generosity and compassion, and her moral example reclaims the compulsive Valere and guides his estranged father towards a rapprochement with his son. Angelica's moral worth lies in sharp contrast to the mercenary attitudes displayed by her sister, Lady Wealthy, whose excessive wealth without accompanying moral values underscores a warning about the risk of corruption inherent in a commercial society. *The Gamester* interrogates and asserts the values required to provide a moral basis to an emergent credit economy: reputation, trust, honour, prudence, compassion, and mutual interdependence. The reforms in the play which critics have dismissed as 'curiously provisional' are less concerned with the moralist drive to prohibit gambling; rather the moral impetus in *The*

[104] Joseph Addison, *Spectator* 367 (May 1, 1712) in *Spectator*, 3:382.

*Gamester* forms part of Centlivre's overlooked contribution to a crucial Whiggish ideological thrust: the merging of commercial values with a culture of virtue and 'politeness'.

### ***The Basset Table*** **(1705)**

Centlivre's subsequent gaming play, *The Basset Table*, demonstrates a similar interest in gambling, speculation and women's roles in the nascent credit economy. The play premiered at the Drury Lane theatre on 20 November 1705, the night after *The Gamester* was revived at the new Queen's Theatre at Haymarket; thus Centlivre made a striking near simultaneous showing of two gaming plays at rival playhouses. *The Basset Table* proved far less popular than its predecessor *The Gamester*, however, running for four nights and garnering Centlivre just one author's benefit.[105] *The Basset Table* had a more successful publication than performance history, with four editions produced between 1705 and 1736.[106] The stage play was not revived again during Centlivre's lifetime but modern productions were staged in London in 1993 and again in 1998.[107]

Critics consider the play to be largely original while suggesting some source material in Jean-Francois Regnard's *Le Divorce* and James Shirley's *The Lady of Pleasure* (1635).[108] However, they have neglected to note a probable borrowing from Richard Steele's *The Careless Husband* (1704), which features a secondary character, the fashionable coquette, Lady Betty Modish, acted by Anne Oldfield, who also played Lady Reveller in *The Basset Table*. Lady Betty's reforms are effected by a ploy designed by her loyal suitor, Lord Morelove, and his friend, the rakish Sir Charles Easy; a plot, which as we shall see, is echoed in Centlivre's *The Basset Table*. Centlivre's play centres on the reformation of a female gambler, Lady Reveller, who spurns the love of the stolid Lord Worthy, in favour of the independent life of a wealthy widow who gambles for pleasure. A host to regular basset games in her home, Reveller attracts a variety of gamblers from different social strata to her table, including the socially ambitious citizen's wife, Mrs Sago, who sees gambling as an entrée to

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[105] See Avery, *London Stage,* 107-8.
[106] The printed text of the play went into a second edition in 1706, a third in 1735 and a fourth in 1736. See Pearson, *Centlivre*, 2.
[107] See Milling, introduction, 12.
[108] See Bowyer, *Centlivre*, 70.

Reveller's social circle. The play concludes when Reveller eventually renounces gambling following a ruse by Worthy's friend, the rakish Sir James Courtly, who stages a mock-rape attempt that convinces Reveller of the moral risks of gaming, driving her to accept Worthy's suit and protection. Mrs Sago too is reformed and compelled to give up gambling when her devious manipulations of her husband's stock to fund her gambling habit drive him to the point of financial ruin. A significant subplot in the play includes that of Reveller's cousin, Valeria, the enthusiastic lady scientist with a passion for natural philosophy and science. Valeria's father, the tyrannical, albeit comic figure, Sir Richard Plainman, disapproves of her intellectual aspirations, and seeks to force her into marriage with a bluff '*Sea Officer*', Captain Hearty.[109] Through another ruse, Valeria's sweetheart, the enlightened Ensign Lovely, disguises himself as a naval captain to win Sir Richard's consent to their marriage.

The play's strong female roles, particularly the figure of Valeria, have attracted significant scholarly attention, largely from feminist critics who focus on the extent of Centlivre's proto-feminism. Jacqueline Pearson sees *The Basset Table* as an 'optimistic' play, and contrasts the figure of Valeria, the 'learned feminist, scientist and philosopher', with the perceived 'mindless self-indulgence of the gambling women'.[110] Other critics adopt a more nuanced view of the play's female gamblers. Victoria Warren highlights the ambivalent nature of the female characters' reforms; as she argues, despite the ostensibly reformist conclusion of the play, the portrayal of independent female figures such as Lady Reveller and Mrs Sago reflects 'the countermovement of the text [which] helps to undercut the ostensible moral, the result of which will be the destruction of the independence of the women who "reform"'.[111] Laura Rosenthal sees the play as exploring the boundaries of a 'feminist individualism' through the central figure of Lady Reveller, who resists the paternal patriarchalism of her uncle, Sir Richard, only to accept the fraternal patriarchalism of Lord Worthy and Sir James

[109] Susanna Centlivre, *The Basset Table*, ed. Jane Milling (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2009), 47. Subsequent references are to this edition.
[110] Jacqueline Pearson, *The Prostituted Muse: Images of Women and Women Dramatists 1642-1737* (New York: St. Martin's, 1988), 213.
[111] Warren, 'Gender,' 618.

Courtly.[112] As Rosenthal contends: 'in spite of Centlivre's feminist attempts to imagine some women as self-owners and consequently as owners of material and immaterial property, *The Basset Table* ultimately demonstrates the limits of Lockean individualism for feminists'.[113]

By contrast, Beth Kowaleski Wallace defines the work as 'conservative comedy', viewing Lady Reveller's reformation as a form of punishment for 'her participation in one kind of rash and particularly egregious economic display'.[114] The trope of the aristocratic and extravagant male gambler, she argues, is transformed into 'the powerful upper rank female character who must be controlled and recuperated within a family structure'.[115] Pointing to the rapid and unpredictable redistribution of wealth in a nascent credit economy, Wallace concludes that '[a]t stake was the integrity of the social fabric itself: in a world where fortunes accrued "irrationally," traditional hierarchies appeared undermined and threatened by those – like the under classes or women – who stood to gain power and independence through recirculated wealth'.[116]

Whilst Wallace rightly identifies the link between gambling and the socio-economic anxieties arising from an inherently unstable system of finance capitalism, her reading fails to distinguish between conservative reformers, such as Jeremy Collier and Arthur Bedford, who sought to defend traditional hierarchies, and Whiggish progressives who assert and recuperate the values of a credit economy. *The Basset Table*, with its strong and appealing female characters and vivid depiction of the excitement of gambling culture, is far from a 'conservative comedy'. Indeed, Arthur Bedford, a prominent Collierite reformist, disputes the moralist intent of Centlivre's gaming plays: 'to expose *Covetousness*, before a Company of *Rakes, Spendthrifts,* and *Prodigals* […] serves rather to sooth them in their *Vices*, and harden them in the contrary *Sin.* The *Gamester* and the *Basset Table*, are written by the same Author, and (omitting several exceptionable Passages), are very little serviceable to the pretended Design'.[117] It is my contention that *The Basset Table* interrogates and

[112] Rosenthal, *Playwrights*, 237.
[113] Ibid., 241.
[114] Beth Kowaleski Wallace 'A Modest Defence of Gaming Women,' *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 31 (2002): 32.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Arthur Bedford, *The Evil and Danger of Stage-Plays* (Bristol, 1706), 127-8.

adapts the trope of the female gamester, linked to popular anxieties about speculation, gender and sexual virtue, to contribute to the ongoing debate on women and commercial virtues. Nothwithstanding the 'happy ending' which conforms to comedic conventions and the demands of a more morally inclined society, the action of the play dramatizes how speculative activities can create a potentially liberating 'space', where gender and social restrictions are flaunted and transcended.[118] As discussed, Centlivre's critics have tended to privilege her dramatization of the contractual marriage as evidence of her partisan position. My reading seeks to shift attention away from marriage hitherto seen as a woman's sole 'choice of life', towards other possible forms of 'professions' be it as a 'female gamester' or the 'female scientist', which may enable women to enter the market economy through alternative routes rather than just marriage.

My reading of *The Gamester* argued for Centlivre's distinctive brand of progressive Whiggism, which seeks to stabilize the excessive passions of gambling and speculation through the agency of a virtuous, commercially able woman. In *The Basset Table*, Centlivre takes this further to explore the direct impact of speculation on women, through the figures of her two female gamblers: the economically independent widow, Lady Reveller, and the socially ambitious citizen's wife, Mrs Sago. I focus on the play's two parallel gambling plots, exploring contemporary anxieties surrounding the figure of the female gamester to consider the portrayal of the two gambling women in the play. Like Valeria's threateningly 'unfeminine' obsession with science and learning, both Reveller's and Sago's love for gaming is linked to their efforts to venture out of their socially proscribed spheres. Lady Reveller's gambling is an assertion of her social and financial independence, whilst Mrs Sago gambles in order to transcend her social class. In the light of Centlivre's Whig affiliations, the reforms in the play are best understood in the wider context of a Whiggish ideological drive to moderate the inherent instabilities of a speculative credit economy, centring on the increasingly dominant stereotypical figure of 'the consuming woman'.

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[118] For the enabling impact of gaming on the play's female gamblers, see Antonella Rigamonti and Laura Favero Carraro, 'Women at Stake: The Self-Assertive Potential of Gambling in Susanna Centlivre's *The Basset Table*,' *Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Theatre Research* 16.2 (2001): 53-62. However this critique neglects Centlivre's partisan commitments and engagement with Whig commercial ideology.

Widespread concerns about the risks of gaming and speculation were underpinned by their perceived social ills: a destabilizing redistribution of wealth, the social mixing of different classes, severe economic loss, and emotional disorders through excessive passions. For female gamblers, the 'vice' of gaming attracted particular anxieties along moral grounds with the loss of chastity held up as the greatest risk to betting women. The period witnessed negative stereotypes of the female gamester linked to sexual and moral concerns, often articulated by Centlivre's Whiggish male contemporaries. Colley Cibber claims that gambling draws the risk of 'reducing a Woman of Honour to stand the presumptuous Addresses of a Man, whom neither her Virtue or Inclination wou'd let her have the least Taste to'.[119] Richard Steele warns of the moral hazard that gambling holds for women: 'The Husband has his Lands to dispose of, the Wife her Person'.[120] *The Ladies Library* (published by Steele) contends that gambling had more damaging consequences for women than for men: 'if Gaming is a Vice in Men, it is much more so in Women; for that one of its Consequences is often the Loss of what is much more valuable than Gold or Diamonds, their Reputation, if not their Honour'.[121]

But if gambling and speculation brought forth anxieties about their perceived feminizing effects on men, equally, criticism of female gamesters centred on the 'masculinizing' effects of gambling. As Steele satirically observes: the woman gambler's 'chief Passion is an Emulation of Manhood'.[122] Female gamesters, he argues, 'acquire such a Boldness, as raises them near the Lordly Creature, Man […] Their natural Tenderness is a Weakness here easily unlearned'.[123] Dennis contends that speculative activities threaten to destabilize social gender differences: '[w]e have Men that are more soft, more languid, and more passive than women […] On the other side we have Woman, who […] in Revenge are Masculine in their Desires, and Masculine in their Practices'.[124] The perceived instabilities brought about by a speculative credit culture include its potential capacity to threaten

[119] Colley Cibber, dedication of *The Lady's Last Stake* (London, 1707).
[120] Richard Steele, *Guardian* 120 (July 29, 1713) in *Guardian*, 403.
[121] *The Ladies Library* (London, 1714), 1:61.
[122] Richard Steele, *Guardian* 174 (September 30, 1713) in *Guardian*, 568.
[123] Ibid., 567-8.
[124] John Dennis, *An Essay upon Public Spirit* [etc] (London, 1711), 15.

social gender differences. As Ingrassia explains: the frenzy of speculation which accompanied the advent of finance capitalism resulted in 'a pervasive cultural crisis that destabilized and ultimately reconfigured the constructed hierarchies of class and gender'.[125] This anxiety is articulated not just by conservative reformists, but by Whig ideologues, who otherwise uphold a progressive view of commercial virtues.

Centlivre's *The Basset Table* interrogates the social anxieties surrounding the figure of the female gamester, exploring, complicating and often challenging popular stereotypes in its portrayal of the two gambling women, Lady Reveller and Mrs Sago. The play opens in a scene of similar disorder and inversion of day and night, which we had witnessed in *The Gamester*, when 'Footmen a-sleep' (p.49) awake and race after their masters and mistresses who are adjourning from Lady Reveller's basset table. As a footman complains: 'I shall be dead before the Year's out; she Games all Night and Sleeps all Day' (p.49). But in contrast to Valere's state of dishevelment after an all-night game, Reveller emerges from the gaming table energetic and in good humour, and even considers a '[w]alk in the Park' (p.50). Unlike Valere, whose temperament swings according to his gambling results, Reveller remains composed and serene no matter her wins and losses. She is insouciant about money, carelessly replying to her maid's questions about her evening's winnings before changing the subject: 'I won about *50 l.* – prethee what shall we do, *Alpiew*? 'Tis a fine morning' (p.50). Later in the play, when Reveller is at the end of a particularly vicious losing streak, she calmly remarks: 'I never had such ill Luck, – I must fetch more Money' (p.102).

Reveller's ample resources and autonomy as an economically independent widow insulate her from the financial dependency and desperation we had witnessed in the case of Valere. While Valere's severe financial losses make him wholly dependent on his father's aid, Reveller, as Rosenthal points out, is 'never really down to her last stake'.[126] Furthermore, her role as host and regular beneficiary of the basset table mitigates any financial losses; basset is noted as a card game whereby the banker holds a strategic monetary advantage over other players. Like Angelica of *The*

[125] Ingrassia, *Paper Credit*, 19.
[126] Rosenthal, *Playwrights*, 237.

*Gamester*, a woman skilled with the workings of the new economy, Reveller demonstrates an admirable composure when speculating at the gaming table, as well as a degree of financial savvy. Lady Reveller's apparent calmness about the losses and gains of speculation also implies that her gambling is not driven by a greed for money; here she departs from the stage tradition of the avaricious female gamester, such as Thomas Southerne's Lady Trickitt of *The Maids Last Prayer* (1693), an upperclass woman gambler who is depicted as greedily counting her takings at the end of a game, gloating that '[t]here's no true Friend but Mony'.[127]

Neither does Lady Reveller exhibit a compulsive drive for gambling; she plays for her own gratification as she makes clear to her uncle, Sir Richard Plainman, and cousin, Lady Lucy.[128] As an independently wealthy widow, Reveller spends, speculates and circulates money as she wishes; as Alpiew points out: 'my Lady's a Widdow, and Widdows are accountable to none for their Actions' (p.52). Reveller laughs off her uncle Sir Richard's admonishments on her incessant gambling as 'ridiculous Advice' (p.53), and he is powerless to rein her in: 'Lookee, Unkle, do what you can, I'm resolv'd to follow my own Inclinations' (p.53). His threat to her that he will 'quit your House; you shant keep your Revels under the Roof where I am' (p.52) falls on deaf ears; indeed, as the affluent property holder of their lodgings, she is well placed to ignore his threats. Centlivre appears consistently interested in representing the financial independence wielded by wealthy widows, such as *The Gamester*'s figures of Mrs Security and Lady Wealthy. While contemporary married women were governed by the legal doctrine of *feme covert*, whereby their legal and economic status is subsumed by that of their husbands', widows,[129] 'accountable to none', held the same independent legal status as that of men and wielded a significant degree of autonomy over their estate, be it in the form of jointure or dower, subject to any specific legal conditions of an inheritance.[130] This granted wealthy widows a far greater degree of financial independence than that of a married

[127] Thomas Southerne, *The Maids Last Prayer* (London, 1693), 8.
[128] See Rigamonti and Carraro, 'Women at Stake,' 55.
[129] Spinsters and widows were governed by the doctrine of *feme sole* and both enjoyed the same independent legal and financial status as that of men; Carlos and Neal, 'Women investors,' 201.
[130] The practice of dower (in which a widow inherits a life interest in one third of her late husband's real property) was gradually replaced by jointure (a marriage settlement creating a provision of land or income for a wife on the decease of her husband) in the early eighteenth century; Staves, *Married Women's*, 27-28.

woman of the same economic class, including considerably more latitude to partake in speculative activities like gambling and equity or bond trading. Peter Earle emphasizes the special status of widows in the contemporary market, highlighting 'the enormous importance of women, particularly widows, in the London investment markets'.[131] Research in women's investment activity in the early eighteenth century attests to the fact that widows played a prominent role in the share exchange. For example, the book value of buying transactions in the Bank of England shares in 1720 amounted to £203,388 for widows, greater than that of spinsters (£132,430), and considerably more than that of married women (£7,000).[132] We are not aware of the specific legal and economic status of Lady Reveller's estate; yet the ample money she draws on to indulge in her gambling activities, her apparent ownership of the property she resides in, and her male relative's powerlessness to control her activities all point to a significant level of financial autonomy.

Lady Reveller appears immune to the excessive passions stereotypically associated with gamblers: she is serene, composed and almost always in control of herself. Indeed, it is her suitor, the stolid Lord Worthy, who comes off as 'feminised'; Mrs Sago dismisses Worthy as 'a meer Woman, full of Spleen and Vapours' (p.73). Worthy's servant, Buckle, describes his master's response to Reveller's repeated rejections as an unmanly fit of hysterics (pp.84-86). Obsessed by his love for Reveller, Worthy is volatile, violent and governed by passions: in Act II he renounces Reveller forever, then soon after bribes her maid Alpiew for a sight of her. He reacts to rejection with violent passion: 'he flung himself into his Coach with such a Force, that he broke all the Windows […] when he came Home he beat all his Servants round to be Reveng'd' (p.84). The power relations between Lady Reveller and Lord Worthy seem to reflect the perceived inversion of gender hierarchies that speculative activities engenders. Reveller, the financially independent speculator displays a 'masculine' impulse for social autonomy and self-assertion. Worthy, on the other hand, is humiliatingly obliged by Reveller to sit by her side at the basset table, reading poetry in order to distract the other players (p.64), despite his avowed distaste for gambling. When Worthy condemns

[131] Peter Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class; Business, Society and Family Life in London, 1660-1730* (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), 173.
[132] See Carlos and Neal, 'Women investors,' 211.

her passion for gaming, Reveller employs politically resonant language to remind him of their power relations: 'Dare you, the Subject of my Power […] Arraign my Pleasures?' (p.88). He submits to her using a vocabulary of political oppression: 'Oh! You have tortur'd me enough, take Pity now dear Tyrant, and let my Sufferings end' (p.88). Reveller's notion of the perfect suitor overturns conventional gender hierarchy and relations: *'He that wou'd gain my Heart must Learn the Way/ Not to Controul, but readily to Obey'* (p.88).

Despite her masterful stance and singular independence, however, Lady Reveller would have proved an attractive figure to many in the audience. Played by the lively Anne Oldfield, whose first big success was as Lady Betty Modish in Cibber's *The Careless Husband*, Oldfield was to perfect the role of the 'rebellious but captivating Lad[y] of Quality'.[133] James Peck describes how successfully Oldfield was able to represent 'youth, beauty, and attraction', and highlights her popularity with the theatre's Whiggish patrons, in particular.[134] Oldfield's captivating stage presence would have drawn a sympathetic response to the rebellious but appealing character of Lady Reveller, who revels in flouting convention. As a contemporary observer comments on one of Oldfield's later performances as a fashionable but recalcitrant 'Lady of Quality', not dissimilar from her role as Lady Reveller: 'Mrs Oldfield formed the centre of admiration, from her looks, her dress, and her admirable performance'.[135] Oldfield's well-known reputation for fashion and glamour would also have contributed to the performative appeal and 'glamourizing' of gambling in the play.

Lady Reveller's attraction to gaming is also underpinned by the dynamic and often chaotic social mixing that speculative activities engender, condemned by Sir Richard as 'Noise, Nonsense, Foppery and Ruin' (p.53). Whilst Valere gambles in a public gaming house, Reveller hosts a regular basset table at home. She eschews, however, elite card parties confined to the 'Quality', but permits players from socially diverse classes to attend. Her gambling partners range from the titled upper class (Lady Gamewel and Lady Raffle (p.50)); the gentry (the 'middling gentleman' (p.98), Sir James

[133] Peck, 'Townly,' 397.
[134] Oldfield's appeal to a Whiggish audience is underpinned by her well-known reputation as a lifelong Whig supporter; she was also the mistress of two prominent Whig politicos. See Peck, 'Townly,' 397-9, 407.
[135] Charles Macklin, *Memoirs of Charles Macklin, Comedian* (London, 1804), 23.

Courtly); the trading class (Mrs Sago, 'the Drugster's Wife' (p.57)); the military (the naval officer, Captain Hearty), as well as the ubiquitous and anonymous 'Sharper' (p.101). Reveller's own social class is not at first evident – she is clearly titled, wealthy and fashionable – but the revelation of her uncle's origins as '*Formerly a Citizen, but now lives in* Covent-Garden' (p.47) implies a connection with the newly gentrified mercantile class. Entrée to Reveller's table is based on money; as she witheringly comments of Mrs Sago: 'A Citizen's Wife is not to be endur'd amongst Quality; had she not Money, 'twere impossible to receive her' (p.65). She similarly dismisses her socially inferior male 'players' thus: 'who cou'd endure these Men did they not lose their Money?' (p.103).

Lady Reveller's contemptuous remarks reveal the power of 'Money' as the overriding social currency of a credit economy. As Alpiew pertly observes: 'you Women of Quality, if there is but Money enough, you stand not upon Birth or Reputation, in either Sex' (p.65). The composition of Reveller's basset table reflects the socially levelling impact of gambling and speculation, and the erosion of social hierarchies condemned by conservative reformers, including Jeremy Collier. Reveller's socially diverse gaming table blurs the boundaries between public and private, domestic and commercial; her cousin, the *'Religious'* and '*sober'* (p.47) Lady Lucy, compares Lady Reveller's house to a public inn: 'you entertain such a Train of People, Cousin, that my Lady *Reveller* is as noted as a publick Ordinary, where every Fool with Money finds a Welcome' (p.54). Sir Richard takes a similar reformist line when he castigates his niece about her 'dangerous' social mixing, with a clearly sexual allusion underpinning his warning: 'you that keep a Basset-Table, a publick Gaming-House […] your Apartment is a Parade for Men of all Ranks, from the Duke to Fidler, and your Vanity thinks they all pay Devoir to your Beauty – but you mistake, every one has his several end in Meeting here, from the Lord to the Sharper, and each their separate Interest to Admire' (p.51). But the power of Sir Richard's moral platitudes is greatly undercut by his comically negative portrayal – he is boorish and bullying, depicted as callously smashing his daughter Valeria's scientific specimens and ordering the servants to clear out her laboratory. The casting of the comedic actor, William Bullock (known for his farces and 'skirt roles'), for the part further undermines any influence that Sir Richard's moralizing critique might have. The upright Lady Lucy is a more serious moral

figure, but her relative passivity is overshadowed by Lady Reveller's energy and charm, and Lucy's lack of agency and influence precludes her from fulfilling the role of moral agent taken by Angelica in *The Gamester.*

Lady Reveller breezily defies both her uncle and cousin, dismissing their anxieties with careless humour; as she responds to Lady Lucy: 'Would you have me shut my doors against my Friends' (p.54). Reveller thrives on her basset table, which functions as a dynamic and enabling social 'space' that enables her to exercise economic freedom, as well as social autonomy. In her study of eighteenth-century female gamblers, Hope Cotton argues that gambling spaces are potentially liberating arenas for women: '[i]n the gambling world women have agency and economic opportunity denied them in the larger culture. So whether these women lose or win monetarily, they create and occupy spaces in which they have a chance to alter their world and their status in it by their participation'.[136] Reveller's basset table can also be seen as a microcosm of the financial spaces that opened up for women at the advent of finance capitalism. Ingrassia describes the new and enabling socio-economic spaces that emerged in the period: '[w]omen's involvement in Exchange Alley enabled them to act within a public financial arena and create a new cultural space. In fact, in the City chocolate houses designed for female spectators sprang up'.[137] This involvement, she explains, 'allows […] women to transcend, however briefly, constraints on their activities and increase their knowledge, discretionary income, and power'.[138]

Reveller's basset table functions as an empowering social enclave where she is liberated from the conventional social constraints linked to her class and gender: here she experiences dynamic social mixing with a diverse 'Train of People', and satisfies her love for manipulating money and her 'Passion for Gain' (p.57). She exploits her verbal and physical attributes – 'a Face, a Shape, a Mein, an Air for Dress, and Wit and Humour to subdue' (p.55) – to indulge in the 'unfeminine' thrill of competition, as when she charmingly invites Captain Hearty to her table with an aside: 'now if we

[136] Hope Cotton, 'Women and risk; the gambling woman in eighteenth-century England' (PhD thesis, Auburn University, 1998), 90.
[137] Ingrassia, *Paper Credit*, 32.
[138] Ibid., 34.

can but Strip this Tarr' (p.100).[139] In her insistence on gambling, Reveller spurns the courtship of her suitor, Worthy, and ignores the advice of her uncle, Sir Richard. Thus she removes herself from the sexual economy in which women are dependent on the approval and desires of men, to partake in a financial economy, where she believes she is free from the judgment of others. For Lady Reveller, her exertions at the basset table are not merely an indulgence in empty pleasures or fashionable vice – Reveller's gambling is invested in a desire for power and autonomy.

Mrs Sago, the aspiring citizen's wife, ventures into Lady Reveller's gaming space for a similar opportunity to reshape her world and her position in it, in this case to rub shoulders with the 'Quality' and improve her social standing. Mrs Sago's identity as 'the Drugster's Wife' (p.57) captures significant aspects of her personality. Drugsters or apothecaries supplied a variety of goods from perfumes, confectionary and spices to herbs and drugs usually dispensed from their premises. The lack of regulation of the contemporary pharmaceutical industry resulted in the frequent association of apothecaries with frauds or 'quacks', suggestive of the deceitful nature of Mrs Sago's character. Whilst apothecaries previously belonged to a trading guild, a change in legislation in 1704, a year before *The Basset Table* was produced, elevated the apothecary trade to members of the medical profession, echoed perhaps in Mrs Sago's intense desire to uplift her social standing.[140] Amongst the popular drugs that apothecaries supplied were analgesic narcotics such as opiates – symbolic of the gambling addiction that plagued this drugster's wife.

To some extent, Mrs Sago conforms to the stage tradition of the socially ambitious and immoral city wife, a stock figure of ridicule and derision; as we shall see however, her role is revised and adapted by Centlivre to comment on the complexities of a new credit economy.[141] For Mrs Sago, gambling is an opportunity to emulate the aristocratic habits of her social superiors, as represented by the object of her admiration, the fashionable Lady Reveller; as Courtly observes of

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[139] See Rigamonti and Carraro, 'Women at Stake,' 55.

[140] See Harold J. Cook, 'The Rose Case Reconsidered: Physicians, Apothecaries and the Law in Augustan England,' *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 45, no. 4 (1990): 527.

[141] For the Restoration comedic trope of foolish and ambitious city wives, married to miserly city husbands and game for fashionable gallants, see John Loftis, 'The Social Milieu of Eighteenth-Century Comedy,' *Modern Philology* 53, no. 2 (Nov 1955): 105.

Mrs Sago: 'she has a vast Passion for my Lady *Reveller*, and endeavours to mimick her in every thing' (p.58). Basset, Reveller's chosen game, was seen as a particularly aristocratic card game of fast pace and high stakes; according to *The Compleat Gamester*, basset is 'the most Courtly' of card games 'thought only for Kings and Queens, great Princes, Noblemen'.[142] Gambling as a mode to climbing the social ladder is similarly dramatized (and ridiculed) in other contemporary comedies; in Mary Pix's *The Beau Defeated* (1700), Mrs Rich, the widow of a wealthy London merchant, declares her laughable ambitions to play at the royal court: 'may I hope to play at Court? I have a great ambition to play at Court: Oh my Stars! I shou'd torment our City Ladies to death, to talk of Honours done me at Court'.[143] In Pix's comedy, citizens are not criticized for their mercantile origins or habits, but for foolishly aping the aristocracy and their follies; as Mr Rich advises his sister-in-law: 'retrench all this Greatness and Folly'.[144] The gentry classes do not escape similar satire; in D'Urfey's *A Fool's Preferment* (1688) (a Whig refashioning of the 'Foolish Cit' plot of Restoration Tory comedies), Cocklebrain, a simple country squire, is ruined by his wife's gambling losses in London, when he is persuaded to abandon the country and reside in town in the foolish hope of social preferment, including an elevation to a dukedom.

Mrs Sago also conforms to the stereotypical figure of the amoral lady gamester. She embarks on an extra-marital affair with Sir James Courtly. With her 'large Portion, and as much Cunning' (p.58) she resembles popular depictions of the deceitful gambling woman, such as the two extravagant and wealthy citizen wives of Vanbrugh's *The Confederacy* (1705), who trick their husbands in order to obtain funds for gambling. Similarly, Pix's *The Beau Defeated* dramatizes two trickster lady gamblers, Mrs Treadwell and Lady La Basset, whose lies and deceit echo Mrs Sago's deviousness. Mrs Sago's schemes and plots, however, display a much more complex financial sophistication. She embezzles her husband's stock in her obsession to gamble at Reveller's table, and her 'Plots and Contrivances to supply these Expences' (p.58) reveal a sharp awareness of the

[142] Cotton, *Compleat Gamester*, 177.
[143] Mary Pix, *The Beau Defeated* in *The Plays of Mary Pix and Catharine Trotter*, ed. Edna L. Steeves (New York: Garland, 1982), 1:11.
[144] Pix, *Beau Defeated,* 1:14.

workings of a trading and credit economy. Mrs Sago purchases her entrée into Reveller's circle by sending her a regular supply of 'the finest Cargo made up of Chocolate, Tea, Montisfiasco Wine' (p.58). This catalogue of the fruits of mercantile expansionism, as well as her gambling habit, are funded by the initial 'investment' of her husband's money, and when that is depleted, by her creation of a complex web of trade relationships with different merchants including 'the *Mercer'* (p.110), 'the *Goldsmith*' (p.110), and the wine merchant or '*Vintner*' (p.110). With her innate 'Cunning' (p.58) and 'fertile Brain' (p.58), Mrs Sago is a skilled manipulator of the credit system; like a 'stockjobber' on Exchange Alley, she buys 'on margin' what she does not own, to a value of 'a Thousand Pound[s]' (p.110). She extracts funds from her husband through devious manipulations of the credit network, for example, by obtaining credit against her husband's assets by sending herself 'gifts' on his account and using those gifts to repay her gambling debts. She persuades her husband to purchase her a diamond ring for the inflated price of 'Threescore Pounds' (p.74), while subsequently returning the ring to obtain a credit note for gambling. Mrs Sago resembles one of the contemporary 'sharpers' and tricksters, who abuse and exploit the credit system, described by John Brewer as a 'parasitic breed who lived off gentlemen, tradesmen and the poor alike'.[145]

Mrs Sago, who gambles away a fortune she does not own, is the embodiment of the risks and anxieties of a speculative credit economy. Her husband's thrifty mercantile world is invaded by the social and financial dangers that accompany speculation and credit: jail, impecuniosity and divorce. After Mrs Sago's final and disastrous losing spell on the basset table, her husband faces financial ruin and imprisonment for 'an Action of a Thousand Pound, that she has taken up Goods for, and Gam'd away' (p.111); he angrily threatens to turn his wife out on the streets (p.111). The case of Mr Sago reminds us that the doctrine of *feme covert* can also disadvantage husbands; as Mrs Sago is a married woman without a separate legal identity, her husband is ultimately responsible for her debts and financial transactions. The sight of the hapless Mr Sago arrested and flanked by '*Two Baliffs'* (p.110) brings home the dark underside of speculation and failure. Brewer describes the 'hazardous and expensive experience' of gaoler's jail in the eighteenth century: 'Fever was rampant and life was

[145] Brewer, 'Commercialization,' 214.

only tolerable if one could pay for the necessities of life […] Garnish, gaolers' fees and room rent all ate away the meagre resources of the unfortunate and the impecunious'.[146] As he points out, those imprisoned tended not to be rich merchants who had the option of bankruptcy, but 'tradesmen, shopkeepers, small masters and retailers: the men who stood at the centre of the web of credit'.[147]

Remarkably, the Sagos are rescued by the generous actions of Sir James Courtly, who posts bail for Mr Sago, pays off Mrs Sago's debts and helps reconcile her with her husband. As he explains to a grateful Mr Sago: 'I have won Part of your Wife's Money, and will that Way restore it to you' (p.113).[148] Courtly's unusual act of 'returning' Mrs Sago, as well as her money to her citizen husband is an inversion of the popular 'cit-cuckold' motif in Tory drama of the earlier Restoration, plotted around the sexual defeat of citizen husbands (aged, impotent men of Whiggish sympathies) at the hands of virile libertine rakes (Tory Cavaliers).[149] In the figure of Courtly, Centlivre creates a new, compassionate and commercially aware version of the libertine rake. On the one hand, his name implies courtly, aristocratic circles, and Courtly – 'the Gay, the Airy, the Witty, Inconstant' (p.106) – displays the usual libertine penchant for gambling and sexual liaisons. His pretended rape of Lady Reveller too reveals a rakish unconcern for the feelings of women and a proclivity for aggressive sexual behaviour. On the other hand, Courtly's rescue of the Sagos demonstrates unusual generosity to his social inferiors and more significantly, a sensitive awareness of the interconnecting system of trade, credit and speculation. In an important conversation with Lady Lucy, Courtly defines himself as only a 'middling gentlem[a]n' (p.98), carefully distinguishing himself from the class of financially irresponsible aristocrats: 'to Ruin Tradesmen is the Qualities Prerogative only: and none beneath a Lord can pretend to do't with an Honourable Air' (p.98).[150] He holds a progressive view of the circulation of money and trade in a credit economy, arguing for the 'many fine Coaches and Equipages […] set up' (p.98) as a result of speculative gains. By the same token,

[146] Ibid., 211.
[147] Ibid.
[148] Courtly's actions are not together altruistic, as it helps him extricate himself from the clutches of Mrs Sago.
[149] For a discussion of the motif, see Douglas Canfield, 'Tupping Your Rival's Woman: Cit-Cuckolding as Class Warfare in Restoration Comedy,' in Quinsey, *Broken Boundaries*, 113-28.
[150] For tradesmen's exposures through credit lines to powerful aristocratic clients in the eighteenth-century 'client economy', see Brewer, 'Commercialization,' 198.

he is sensitive to the downward spiral of losses from credit and speculation that can ruin the middling tradesman, and is careful to compensate the Sagos for their losses. As Mr Sago exclaims: 'I believe you are the first Gamester that ever Refunded' (p.113).

Courtly is responsible for engineering Lady Reveller's reforms and subsequent marriage to Lord Worthy in his staging of a mock-rape. He secretly slips 'Fifty Guineas' (p.107) into Reveller's purse during a game, and subsequently pretends to demand his 'stake' through sexual favours by force. Courtly's pretended rape attempt seems to underscore the perceived moral and sexual risks that gaming women face. However, despite her fondness for an 'admiring Crowd' (p.55), and unlike Mrs Sago and other popular depictions of female gamesters, Lady Reveller is sexually virtuous.[151] She holds to a deeply personal concept of 'Innate Virtue' (p.107); as she explains to Lady Lucy: 'I slight the malicious Censure of the Town, yet defy it to asperse my Vertue' (p.55). Unlike Lady Lucy's conflation of 'Coquetry and Reputation' (p.55), contending that 'there is no difference in the Eye of the World, between having really committed the Fault, and lying under the Scandal' (p.55), Lady Reveller rejects a concern with the appearance of virtue, a mere 'Name' (p.55), in favour of the real substance of 'Vertue'. Her conception of virtue is one unconcerned about publicity and reputation, and dismissive of external judgment. In line with her impulse for independence and autonomy, Reveller's notion of virtue rejects the feminine, culturally subordinate position of being dependent on the judgment of others.

Lady Reveller's code of sexual honour is apparent during the mock attempted-rape scene when she implores Courtly to '[k]ill me rather than destroy my Honour' (p.106). She strikes down with anger Courtly's attempt to prostitute her by offering her more money: 'Perish your Money with your self – you Villain […] I'll have your Life for this Affront' (p.107). When Courtly cautions her to hush in the fear of causing a scene, she prefers to alert the household and risk creating a scandal: 'Raise the House, I'll raise the World in my Defence' (p.107). Centlivre complicates and problematizes the trope of the female gambler, by depicting an innately virtuous woman, whose venture into

[151] Stage depictions of sexually immoral female gamblers include the duplicitous adulteress, Aurelia, of D'Urfey's *A Fool's Preferment* (1688), and Farquhar's Lady Lurewell of *Sir Harry Wildair* (1701).

speculation nevertheless exposes her to all the prejudices that accompany gambling women, with potentially damaging consequences to herself, sexually and morally. In justifying the 'rape', Courtly plays with the popular association of gambling with female sexual immorality: 'Can a Lady that loves Play so passionately as you do – that takes as much Pains to draw Men in to lose their Money […] that Caresses all Sorts of People for your Interest […] Can you, I say, boast of Innate Virtue?' (p.107).

Lady Reveller's code of innate virtue independent of external judgment and reputation is revealed as powerless in the face of male aggression, and male financial and sexual manipulation. The mock-rape brings home to Reveller her female vulnerability when venturing out of a solely private domestic space into a public space of market exchange that gambling represents. In a speculative exchange where money and movable assets change hands, women cannot avoid the double bind – that society sees them not just as players but as commodities themselves. Overcome with gratitude to Lord Worthy for his ostensible 'rescue' of her, Lady Reveller promises to renounce gambling and grant him her hand in marriage: 'forgive me – and if still you think me Worthy of your Heart – I here Return you Mine – and will this Hour Sign it with my Hand' (p.108). In forfeiting the pleasures of the basset table and giving up her socially and financially independent status as a widow, Reveller seems to discard previous notions of autonomy in return for male protection. As Buckle comments: 'tis Time to throw up the Cards when the Games out' (p.114).

Mrs Sago's reconciliation with her husband is similarly contingent on her agreement to forsake gambling, but also on her commitment to 'take up with City Acquaintance […] and go Twice a Week with Mrs *Outside* to *Pin-makers-hall*' (p.113). Mrs Sago, then, promises to put an end to her ambitions to transcend her social class, and revert to her proscribed social sphere as a tradesman's wife in '*Pin-makers-hall*' (p.113). Thus the reforms in the play are not only concerned with the renunciation of the 'vice' of gaming but succeed in returning both women to a private, domestic, class-appropriate space, set apart from the speculative exchange market.

Unlike its companion piece, *The Gamester*, *The Basset Table* lacks a clear moral centre or guide. The reforms in the play – Lady Reveller's renunciation of gambling and subsequent marriage

and Mrs Sago's reconciliation with her husband – are largely effected by Sir James Courtly, a clearly flawed moral agent. Courtly is a composite figure, both libertine rake and Whiggish commercial man; a gambler himself, who holds progressive views on the credit economy but whose reformist actions seem to endorse the return of women to a conventional marital state, in a private domestic sphere set apart from exchange and speculation. Significantly, Courtly himself does not renounce gambling; however, his love for the sober, morally upright Lady Lucy, who abhors gambling and asserts the importance of a woman's reputation, seems to indicate his ultimately conservative notion of a woman's proper role.

Courtly's double standards signal a misogynistic Whig ideological manoeuvre underpinning the defence and recuperation of a nascent exchange economy. As critics have noted, contemporary Whig discourse sought to manage the exigencies of a credit economy by displacing the perceived hysteria and instability associated with market forces onto the containable figure of 'the consuming woman', who might be safely reformed and confined in a domestic sphere, posited as a site of virtue that the market does not enter.[152] Erin Mackie explains the misogynistic underpinnings of commercial virtues: '[t]he feminine figures the potential excesses, instabilities, and irrationalities of the market that modern economic man sought to rationalize, contain and manage'.[153] She pinpoints Addison's and Steele's ideological work in their periodicals to construct 'a private world of naturalized, feminised domesticity, a sane asylum from the fraudulent public world with its commercial ethics and its consuming passions'.[154] James Peck sees the eighteenth-century figure of the gambling woman as figuring excessive consumption, arguing that the image of 'the consuming woman [is] a physic displacement of the potentially enervating anxiety that the Whigs felt about the credit upon which their wealth is based'.[155] As we have seen in my reading of *The Gamester*, Whig ideologues such as Defoe and Addison constructed Credit as a hysterical female figure, thus configuring the instabilities of finance capitalism in images of the feminine that might be moderated

[152] See, for example, Erin Mackie, *Market a la Mode: Fashion, Commodity and Gender in 'The Tatler' and 'The Spectator,'* (Baltimore; London: John Hopkins University Press, 1997); and Peck, 'Townly,' 397-416.
[153] Mackie, *Market,* 40.
[154] Ibid., 118.
[155] Peck, 'Townly,' 415.

and managed by the forces of a rational masculinity.

The reformist conclusion of *The Basset Table* registers and anticipates these ideological impulses in the renunciation of gaming by Lady Reveller and Mrs Sago and their return to a contained domestic sphere; the former through her marriage to a stolid, conservative aristocrat who disapproves of gaming, the latter through her reconciliation with her tradesman husband and her class-bound social circle in 'Pin-makers-hall'. Yet this impulse is also resisted and undercut by Centlivre's parallel depiction of the speculative exchange as an exhilarating, enabling space for women, and by the complexities and inconsistencies revealed in her interrogation of the stereotypical figure of the female gamester.

*The Basset Table* is a story of women in the world of speculation and exchange. Lady Reveller embodies the overturning of gender hierarchies that speculation engenders in her assertion of a 'masculine' impulse for social and financial autonomy, albeit temporarily. Challenging cultural configurations of the feminine as unstable and hysterical, she is composed, rational, and endowed with a degree of financial savvy. Reveller is also sexually virtuous, possessing a code of innate virtue and honour; however she remains vulnerable to the social prejudices attached to female gamesters that associate gambling with female sexual immorality. The lesson that Lady Reveller learns is that virtue in a commercial society cannot be divorced from reputation and external judgment, just as a tradesman's reputation is dependent on public estimation of his credibility and value; as Steele famously asserts: 'Credit is undone in Whispers'.[156]

Mrs Sago stands as a cautionary tale of excessive credit and speculation. She represents the worst of both worlds: the financial extravagance and libertine sexual values of an old aristocratic creed, and the corrupt practices of the breed of 'sharpers' and tricksters, who exploit the opportunities provided by the new system of credit and exchange. As Jane Milling points out, however, Mrs Sago's punishment is gentle; she is rescued by the generous act of a commercially aware 'middling' gentleman.[157] The Sagos' rescue from impecuniousness and ruin underscores the

[156] Richard Steele, *Spectator* 218 (November 9, 1711) in *Spectator*, 2:350.
[157] Milling, introduction, 18.

progressive Whiggish notion that the virtue of compassion coupled with a sensitive awareness of the interlocking system of trade and credit can mitigate the worst dangers that the credit economy can pose. Yet Mrs Sago's return to a domestic, class-bound milieu also seems to endorse the moral platitudes of conservative reformists who condemn the destabilizing impact of speculation on social and gender hierarchies.

*The Basset Table* explores and interrogates the various complexities and anxieties about gender, speculation and virtue in a nascent commercial society but eschews offering a simple or didactic moral message. Centlivre does seem to gesture to a solution, however, in the figure of Valeria, the *'Philosophical Girl*' (p.47), with an unconventional passion for science and learning.[158] Valeria escapes the patriarchal tyranny of her father, Sir Richard, to 'contract' a mutually agreed, egalitarian union with the enlightened Ensign Lovely, who supports her intellectual endeavours. Unlike the two gambling women, Lady Reveller and Mrs Sago, whose marriages will preclude them from future public activity as gamblers and speculators, Valeria's union with Lovely enables her to continue with her scientific learning; 'Valeria is not required to foreswear her experimentation after marriage, nor is it presented as a bar to domestic order'.[159] Centlivre's remarkably sympathetic (albeit humorous) portrait of this rational, humane and critically intelligent female virtuoso signals her engagement with the lively debates on female education of the time, and her support for the positive implications it holds for women. Education and learning, she seems to say, may offer the only unequivocally enabling solution to women in a rapidly changing, yet still patriarchal society.

As we have seen, Trotter and Centlivre made valuable contributions to Whig reforming discourse in contemporary drama. As do the militaristic plays of her male compatriots, Trotter's *Revolution* propounds a patriotic notion of Whig heroic virtue at a time of war. Yet Trotter asserts a feminised conception of public virtue embodied by her courageous, civic-minded heroines; her affirmation of a contractarian polity refashions Lockean ideology to encompass both the state and the family. Centlivre's gaming plays display her distinctive figuration of Whig commercial virtues. In

[158] For discussions on Valeria as the embodiment of an independent, learned woman, see Milling, introduction, 22-30.
[159] Ibid., 30.

contrast to the dominant images of an unstable 'Lady Credit', *The Gamester* invests commercial virtues in its financially savvy heroine, who exerts a stabilizing female agency in a new credit economy. *The Basset Table* offers a more complex treatment of the role of women in early finance capitalism. The play registers the Whiggish drive to displace commercial impulses on to the figure of 'the consuming woman'; yet Centlivre mitigates and undercuts these misogynistic impulses by her corresponding vision of the enabling impact of speculative activities on women, which parallels historical developments in the nascent market exchange. In the next section, I turn to women writers' contributions to the evolution of early Whig poetics, focusing on a range of public poems by Egerton, Trotter and Centlivre, which engage with the crucial partisan issues of their time: war, peace, and the Protestant Hanoverian succession.

# 4

## Liberty, War and 'Whig Feminism': the political poetry of Sarah Fyge Egerton

This chapter explores Sarah Fyge Egerton's contribution to a nascent Whig poetics through a focus on her public and political poetry. The aims of my reading are as follows: to establish Egerton's Whig credentials and her connections to the political, intellectual and literary circles of the day; to explore her partisan commitments articulated in her public poems addressed to William III and Queen Anne; to locate unexplored connections between her party political verse and her proto-feminist poems to illuminate our understanding of what can be described as her 'Whig feminism'. Studying Egerton's neglected political poems alongside her better-known feminist works reveals a hitherto unacknowledged picture of Egerton as a politically engaged writer, whose Whiggish commitments enabled and informed her claims for women's liberty.

Lauded by her female contemporaries as a 'Champion for our Sex', and for her mastery of a variety of poetic themes, Egerton remains an enigmatic figure in modern narratives of women's literary history.[1] She gained youthful notoriety with the publication of *Female Advocate* (1686) – a polemical riposte to Robert Gould's misogynistic tract, *Love given O're* (1682). *Female Advocate* gained Egerton a fair amount of public attention going through three editions in 1686, 1687 and 1706, but earned her the ire of her father who was probably responsible for her subsequent banishment from London.[2] For modern readers, Egerton's best known works are the aforementioned *Female Advocate* and her regularly anthologized proto-feminist poems, 'The Liberty' and 'The Emulation', originally published in her 1703 collection: *Poems on Several Occasions, Together with a Pastoral*, (hereinafter *Poems*).[3]

What has attracted little attention, however, are Egerton's Whiggish affiliations, articulated in her rarely studied public poems, and underscored by her family connections and networks. In the only substantive critique of any of Egerton's public poems, Carol Barash explores Egerton's

[1] S.C., '*To Mrs.* S. F. *on her incomparable Poems*' in Egerton, *Poems.*
[2] Egerton describes the rift with her father in her poem: '*On my leaving* London, June *the* 29' (1703).
[3] Egerton, *Poems*. Subsequent in-text references are to this edition.

panegyric to Queen Anne alongside the works of Mary Chudleigh and Mary Astell.[4] But whilst Barash rightly concludes that the Queen's political legitimacy lends literary authority to Egerton and her female contemporaries, her reading neglects to distinguish between each writer's political agendas, including Astell's Toryism and Egerton's Whig sympathies. Indeed, Barash's description of Egerton as 'pro-Stuart' and the inclusion of Egerton in Barash's extensive study of Royalist and Tory women writers have contributed to a misleading impression of Egerton's politics.[5] Karen O'Brien, for example, references Barash's work in her description of Egerton as 'actively embrac[ing] the more traditional political ideologies of the […] Tory or Jacobite parties'.[6]

Nonetheless Barash is unusual in attending to Egerton's partisan political work at all. Egerton's critics have primarily focused on personal details of her life as the context of her work. Commentaries on her poetry to date largely comprise brief discussions in book chapters, literary surveys and anthologies.[7] There have been only two journal articles exclusively addressing her work: an article by Jeslyn Medoff, and a paper by Michael Genovese who considers Egerton's personal 'dignity' as the source of her poetic authority.[8] Both critics examine Egerton's poetry in the context of biographical details of her life, in particular her fraught relationship with her father, and two difficult and unsuccessful marriages. The most extensive critique of Egerton's *oeuvre* remains Medoff's unpublished doctoral dissertation of 1994, which, while providing a valuable resource for her background and poetic output, interprets her writings as 'encoded poetic autobiography'.[9]

This almost exclusive focus on the autobiographical elements of her poetry can be reductive, obscuring the partisan political aspect of Egerton's authorial identity, and indeed her wide-ranging interest in the socio-political and intellectual currents of the day. Her 1703 volume, which addresses a range of themes and adopts a variety of styles and moods, is best known for its love and autobiographical poems, as well as the two aforementioned feminist works. The critical neglect of

[4] Barash, *Women's Poetry,* 245-50.
[5] Ibid., 2.
[6] O'Brien, 'Enlightenment,' 624.
[7] See for example, Williamson, *Voices*, 158-65; and Hilda Smith, *Reason's Disciples: Seventeenth-Century English Feminists* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 177-87.
[8] See Medoff, 'New Light,' 155-75; and Genovese, 'Egerton,' 45-66.
[9] Medoff, 'Daring Pen,' ii.

Egerton's political interest is evident when the modern editors of the facsimile publication of her poems, Robert C. Evans and MeKoi Scott, erroneously describe her panegyric to Anne as 'effusive poetic praise' for Anne's sister, Mary II.[10] The privileging of women writers' personal and domestic interests remains a common critical practice, underscored in Egerton's case by her adoption of the customary female modesty *topos* in her volume's dedication: 'Love seems the only proper Theme….for a Woman's Pen'.[11] This contention, however, is not borne out by her work; even a brief review of her 1703 volume reveals Egerton's wide-ranging interest beyond the personal and the domestic, articulated in a variety of poems which address leading intellectual and public figures, as well as the major philosophical and socio-political controversies of the day.

A poem to the natural philosopher, Robert Boyle, alludes to a heated contemporary theological debate: the challenge to Revealed Religion by an emergent Natural Religion.[12] Egerton praises Boyle, 'the great Champion of Providence' (p.12), for emphasizing the power of God rather than that of Nature.[13] 'On Atheism' adopts the customary association of libertinism with atheism, condemning the 'daring Atheist' (p.61) for his '[e]xtravagance of floating Wit,/ Buoy'd up with Wine and sensual Appetite' (p.62). This poem has a political edge; Egerton's indictment of the libertine-atheist and his privileging of appetitive pleasures can be seen as a rejection of the creed of a previous age, associated with the libertine rakes of the Royalist Stuart court. An address to a contemporary theologian[14] (possibly Timothy Nourse) takes a similar line, associating atheists and libertines with their perceived adoption of the philosophy of Hobbes; Hobbes and Epicurus were understood to have shaped the philosophy of the Restoration rake:[15]

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[10] Robert C. Evans and MeKoi Scott, introduction to *Sarah Fyge Egerton* (Farnham, Surrey; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012), xiii.

[11] Egerton, dedication of *Poems*.

[12] Sarah Fyge Egerton, '*To the* Honourable Robert Boyle,' in *Poems*, 11-13.

[13] The emergent Natural Religion, which gained impetus from a Newtonian cosmology and Locke's insistence that reason must be the test of faith, asserts a rationalist 'System of Nature'; see Martin Battestin, 'The Critique of Freethinking from Swift to Sterne,' *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 15, no. 3-4 (2003): 339-420.

[14] Sarah Fyge Egerton, '*On the Author of* Religion by Reason, or the Light of Nature a Guide to Divine Truth' in *Poems*, 60-61.

[15] See Warren L. Chernaik, *Sexual Freedom in Restoration Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 22-51.

> Let the bold Atheist read thy Noble Line,
> In every Leaf he'll see a Power Divine […]
> Had *Hobs* but seen it, that bold daring Man,
> Himself had burnt his own Leviathan. (p.61)

Another poem, 'The Extacy', draws authority from the country's imperial projects; the poetic speaker soars high above ground to view '[t]he stately Trophies of *Britania*'s Pride:/ Her Ships which to the *Indies* Trade' (p.5). '*To* Marcella', which was probably addressed to the actress Anne Bracegirdle, articulates Egerton's interest in the theatrical controversies of her time. Egerton appears to endorse the impulse for moral reform of the theatre when she lauds the actress for embodying '[v]irtue on the Stage' in 'so wanton and debauch an Age' (p.56). Throughout the volume, we witness Egerton's engagement with contemporary literary figures, in her poetic addresses to Nahum Tate ('*To Mr* N. Tate *Esq; on the Queen's Picture*') and Thomas Yalden ('*To Mr* Yalden, *on his Temple of Fame*'); a pastoral dialogue, 'The fond Shepherdess. A Pastoral,' is dedicated to William Congreve. Clearly Egerton's poetic interest is not confined to the personal and the domestic but encompasses the socio-political and intellectual currents of her time.

Egerton's family background and social circles also provide revealing clues to possible influences on her work. A family tree published in seventeenth-century visitation records reveals a Fyge kinsman who fought for the parliamentarians during the Civil War.[16] Although the Fyge family had been landowners in Winslow, Buckinghamshire, since the sixteenth century, Egerton's grandfather, Valentine Fyge, a moderate dissenter, relocated to London and served as Common-Councilman for the St Bride's precinct.[17] As Medoff's detailed research has shown, Egerton's father, Thomas Fyge, was a professional apothecary who rose to become a prominent London citizen and a member of the city council of the parish of St Botoloph.[18] Thomas Fyge appeared in a list of common councilmen compiled in 1682 during Charles II's attempt to expunge Whigs from positions of power; Fyge's name was marked by a 'naught' identifying him as a Whig.[19] His political loyalties are also

[16] *The Visitation of the County of Buckingham made in 1634,* ed. W. Harry Rylands (London, 1909), 54.
[17] The Winslow history website, accessed February 10, 2016, http://www.winslow-history.org.uk/winslow_families-fige.shtm.
[18] Medoff, 'Daring Pen,' 35.
[19] Ibid., 39-40.

evident from his subscription of the substantial sum of 600 pounds in a 1698 lottery supported by the prominent Whigs, the Duke of Shrewsbury and Lord Coningsby.[20]

Egerton's forebears, then, comprise London citizens, moderate dissenters, puritans and Whigs. Her family was also distinguished by a connection to contemporary female intellectual circles. Thomas Fyge's first wife and Egerton's mother, Rebecca Allcock, died in 1672, and he subsequently married Mary Beacham, a granddaughter of Ralph Cudworth, the prominent Cambridge Platonist.[21] Beacham was also the niece of Damaris, Lady Masham, the poet and essayist closely associated with the Whig ideologist, John Locke, who lived with the Masham family on their estate at Oates for more than a decade until his death in 1704.[22] Medoff speculates that Beacham, who came from a family background of well-educated women, was likely to have influenced the intellectual interests of her stepdaughter, Egerton.[23] But Medoff has not noted the possible political influence of the Puritan and Whiggish leanings of Beacham's and Masham's families. Ralph Cudworth (Beacham's grandfather and Masham's father) had Parliamentarian connections, and owed his early promotion at Cambridge University to the purges of Royalist sympathizers during the Interregnum.[24] Damaris Masham was married to Sir Francis Masham, the grandson of the Parliamentarian Sir William Masham, who sat for the county of Essex in the 1640s and 1650s.[25] The Mashams were related to Oliver Cromwell, who visited the family seat of Oates in 1638.[26] Damaris Masham was an intimate friend of Locke's and they both shared a Whiggish commitment to religious toleration. Damaris was also a friend and correspondent of the third Earl of Shaftesbury, the important Whig philosopher, who was closely connected to Locke.[27] We do not

[20] Ibid., 40.
[21] Ibid., 36.
[22] See Jacqueline Broad, **'**A Woman's Influence? John Locke and Damaris Masham on Moral Accountability**,'** *Journal of the History of Ideas* 67, no. 3 (2006): 489-510.
[23] Medoff, 'Daring Pen,' 39.
[24] See Sarah Hutton, 'Religion and Sociability in the Correspondence of Damaris Masham (1658-1708),' in Apetrei and Smith, *Religion,* 120.
[25] The History of Parliament: British Political, Social & Local History, accessed February 18, 2016, https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/member/masham-sir-william-1591-1656.
[26] See Oliver Cromwell, *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches, with Elucidations by Thomas Carlyle* (London, 1848), 126.
[27] Sarah Hutton, 'Debating the Faith: Damaris Masham (1658-1708) and Religious Controversy,' in *Debating the Faith Religion and Letter-Writing in Great Britain, 1550-1800*, eds. Anne Dunan-Page and Clotilde Prunier (Dordrecht: Springer, 2013), 159-75.

have any evidence of any friendship or contact between Egerton and Masham; however they share a mutual connection in Catharine Trotter who was a friend and correspondent of Masham's.[28] Egerton and Masham certainly shared a proto-feminist interest in advocating female intellectual pursuits; as in Egerton's outspoken demands that women should be allowed to participate in learning and science, Masham argues that 'I see no Reason why it should not be thought that all Science lyes as open to a Lady as to a man'.[29]

Egerton had supportive literary relationships with the co-contributors to *The Nine Muses,* at least until the party wars became especially heated in the second half of the first decade of the eighteenth century. With the exception of Delarivier Manley, Egerton's female literary connections appear to comprise Whiggish sympathisers. Egerton's *Poems* was prefaced by glowing commendations by her fellow poets from *The Nine Muses*, Pix and Centlivre. Egerton may have also been acquainted with the Whig writer, Elizabeth Thomas, who was with Egerton one of the only two female contributors to *Luctus Britannici*, the competing volume of elegies to Dryden. Egerton's relationship with the Tory Manley appears to have deteriorated sometime from 1704 onwards. During that year, they were still on good enough terms for Manley to have paid Egerton an extended visit in Buckinghamshire; however they seemed to have quarrelled during the visit, a conflict exacerbated in the following year by a dispute over a court case of 1705 in which Egerton testified to Manley's pecuniary disadvantage.[30] In addition to their personal animosities, Egerton's Whig loyalties and the increasingly heated partisanship in the reign of Anne suggest a political motive for the feud between Egerton and Manley, and the latter's subsequent public persecution of her former friend. Manley viciously attacked Egerton as a 'She-Devil incarnate' in *The New Atalantis* (1709) and disparaged the poet in a memorable account of Egerton hitting her husband, Thomas Egerton, in the

[28] For Trotter's account of her friendship with Damaris Masham, see Trotter to Thomas Burnet, 10 September 1708, in Trotter, *Works*, 2:205-7.

[29] Damaris Cudworth Masham, *A Discourse Concerning the Love of God and Occasional Thoughts in Reference to a Vertuous or Christian Life,* ed. James G. Buickerood (Bristol: Thoemmes, 2004), 227.

[30] Egerton probably foiled Manley's attempts to help Mary Thompson in a palimony suit brought to Doctors' Commons; see Carnell, *Biography*, 128-30.

face with a hot apple-pie followed by a 'Plate of Butter' and a 'Tankard' of drink.[31] Carole Sargeant has explored the coded political associations of the motifs of pie, butter and drink; as she rightly observes, '[p]olitically aware readers would have further recognized Manley's [apple-pie] scene as a burlesque metaphor of the war between Whigs and Tories in Queen Anne's court'.[32] Manley's *Memoirs of Europe* (1710) satirizes Egerton as 'Clarinda', one of a number of women writers who sought patronage from Whig politicians – a group denigrated as 'a Collection of the Furies'.[33] Manley also publicly attacked her other former compatriots from *The Nine Muses*, often mocking and satirizing their Whiggish connections. *The New Atalantis* includes an unflattering depiction of Pix as a 'lazy' friend whose artistic 'Genius' had 'shrunk', and who would later cheat the poet (Manley) by claiming an elegy the latter composed was her own.[34] Centlivre was scorned by Manley as 'a certain Poet' whose apparent attempts to procure patronage from the Whig peer, the Duke of Newcastle, had allegedly been humiliatingly rebuffed.[35] More scandalously, Manley's *The New Atalantis* satirizes Trotter and Sarah Piers as figures involved in 'a lesbian cabal involving prominent Whig women'.[36] Manley's *Memoirs of Europe* disparages Trotter's relations with the Whig Junto lord, Lord Somers, who is satirized as Julius Sergius: 'This Thing without a Name [Trotter], is only known by the permission *Julius Sergius* gave her to invoke him as a Patron'.[37] Manley also became estranged from another Whig writer, Richard Steele, to whom she used to be close; Steele was denounced by Manley in *The New Atalantis* as '*Monsieur Le Ingrate'*.[38] She subsequently attacked Steele in a political pamphlet, a vocal riposte to an issue of the *Guardian* written by Steele.[39] Clearly, Egerton – along with Steele, Trotter, Piers and Pix – numbered amongst the ranks of Whig writers whom Manley publicly attacked and satirized in her career as a Tory propagandist.

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[31] Manley, *Works,* 2:99-100.
[32] Carole Fungaroli Sargeant, 'How A Pie Fight Satirizes Whig-Tory Conflict in Delarivier Manley's *The New Atalantis*,' *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 44, no. 4 (Summer 2011): 516.
[33] Manley, *Works,* 3:133.
[34] Ibid., 2:58.
[35] Ibid., 2:177-81.
[36] Carnell, *Biography*, 183. For Manley's depiction of the female cabal see, Manley, *Works,* 2:111.
[37] Ibid., 3:133.
[38] Ibid., 2:116.
[39] See Delarivier Manley, *The Honour and Prerogative of the Queen's Majesty Vindicated* (London, 1713).

Egerton's Whig sympathies are also suggested by her choice of patron in the dedication of her 1703 collection to the Whig grandee, Charles Montagu, the Earl of Halifax. Montagu was an accomplished writer himself and an early and important proponent of Whig heroic verse.[40] That Egerton was familiar with his poetry is indicated in her dedication which describes the statesman as 'the best of Poets and of Judges', praising him for his 'inimitable Lines (the soft Diversion of your more leisure Hours) [which] can Charm that World'.[41] Montagu was also the dedicatee of the non-partisan poetic volume, *The Nine Muses* (1700); yet Montagu's political fortunes had turned by 1701, a year during which he faced impeachment by the House of Commons, and following the accession of Anne in 1702, the peer was dismissed from the Privy Council.[42] That Egerton's volume published early in the reign of Anne (whose patronage she might have been expected to seek, as did a number of other woman writers) was dedicated to Montagu in his declining political years implies a strong sense of identification with the Whig statesman. Egerton appears to have had some friendly contact with Montagu; as she reported, the peer responded positively to her tribute: 'my Lord H_x's repeated thanks, and he made me a noble present'.[43] As we shall see in the next section, Egerton's identification with Montagu encompasses both his politics and poetics, and her tribute to King William draws upon many of the themes and tropes of Montagu's Williamite panegyrics.

### '*On the Death of* William III, *King of* England' (1703)

Egerton's address to William belongs to the genre of the political elegy, in which she mourns the death of this national figure and memorializes his political and military achievements. The poem is an important document of Egerton's political engagement and response to a Whig poetic agenda which has not received adequate scholarly attention. In the only critical commentary of the poem to date, Carol Barash, in a footnote, dismisses the incomplete work as both 'a necessary and an

[40] See Williams, *Literary Culture,* 1-12.
[41] Egerton, dedication of *Poems.*
[42] See Stuart Handley, 'Montagu, Charles, earl of Halifax (1661-1715),' in *ODNB* (Oxford University Press, 2004), accessed February 18, 2016, https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:4563/10.1093/ref:odnb/19004.
[43] See a reprint of an undated letter attributed to Egerton; *Gentleman's Magazine* 51 (March 1781): 121.

impossible gesture after her proud defence […of] Anne'.[44] Alluding to Egerton's panegyric to Anne published in the same volume, Barash seems to suggest that the act of lauding William, the Whig hero, is incompatible with paying tribute to the Tory Anne. Yet contemporary poets of Whiggish affiliations celebrated both William and Anne in their laudatory verse.[45] Egerton's identification with the Queen in no way detracts from her Williamite stance articulated in her elegy. Indeed, as my reading demonstrates, Egerton's panegyric to Anne, suffused with the same Whiggish tropes of war and militarism employed in her address to William, projects the Queen in the heroic image of her predecessor.[46]

The tribute to William appears towards the end of Egerton's 1703 volume, suggestively placed on the opposite leaf to an address to the poet and clergyman, Thomas Yalden, which praises his elegy on the young Duke of Gloucester's death.[47] Preceding the address to Yalden in the collection is one of Egerton's better-known feminist poems, 'The Emulation'. The close proximity of the two poems inscribed to Yalden and William indicates Egerton's concerns on how to mourn a national figure and pay tribute to the King. By positioning herself closely to Yalden, known for his Williamite panegyrics, Egerton seeks to draw upon the literary authority of a patriotic male poet to assert her own legitimacy in the field. She praises Yalden as an exemplary panegyrist – 'You from whom Kings such Glories do receive' (p.110) – an allusion to his poetic tribute to William, *On the Conquest of Namur* (1695). At the same time, the proximity of Egerton's proto-feminist work, 'The Emulation', is suggestive of the ways in which the same empowering themes and tropes of post-revolutionary Whig verse underpin and inform her feminist aims, a connection I will explore in greater detail later in this chapter.

As Joseph Hone estimates, forty-six elegies to William were published in the immediate

[44] Barash, *Women's Poetry*, 250, n111.

[45] John Dennis, for example, produced an elegy to William (*The Monument* (1702)), and a panegyric to Anne (*Britannia Triumphans* (1704)).

[46] As Hone points out, after William's death, the elegiac mode enabled Whig poets to nostalgically celebrate the triumphs of the Revolution, while fashioning Anne as heir to her predecessor; Joseph Hone, 'Politicising Praise: Panegyric and the Accession of Queen Anne,' *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 37, no. 2 (June 2014): 149.

[47] Thomas Yalden composed Williamite panegyrics in the 1690s, but turned to the High Church party during Anne's reign; Nigel Aston, 'Yalden, Thomas, (1670-1736)' in *ODNB* (Oxford University Press, 2004), accessed February 15, 2016, https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:4563/10.1093/ref:odnb/30182.

aftermath of the King's death.[48] William's elegists comprised Whig literary practitioners such as John Dennis, John Hughes and Francis Manning.[49] Egerton's tribute, which was published in her 1703 collection, is not included in Hone's estimate, which is based on David Foxon's catalogue which lists separately printed poems only.[50] Hone argues that elegies to William share much in common with Whig laudatory verse of the 1690s in which the King was mythologized as a heroic warrior-prince.[51] Egerton's elegy to the late King employs many of the themes and motifs of Whig panegyrics of the Revolution; yet my reading reveals some significant departures: Egerton's feminine negotiations of the masculinist tropes of martial violence and her complex engagement with a male figure of political authority.

Egerton's commitment to a Whig poetic agenda is evident in the terms upon which William is memorialized in her elegy – the same terms employed in Whiggish vindications of the King's assumption of rule in 1688. The extraordinary events of the Glorious Revolution – William's invasion of Britain, James II's ignominious flight to France, and William and Mary's subsequent assumption of the throne – compelled numerous defences and justifications by Whig poets and polemicists.[52] While the ostensible 'facts' of the case were presented as William responding to a request for assistance signed by seven leading British peers, Whig propagandists also worked to reconcile what amounted to an invasion by a foreign prince with their trope of the Revolution as a restoration of the nation's liberties. To counter the image of an external imposition by a foreign power, Whig panegyrics emphasized the Revolution as a restoration of ancient English laws and privileges broken by the Stuarts' 'tyrannical' rule.[53] Avoiding an assertion of a traditional 'conquest by the sword', which would set a dangerous precedent for future usurpers, William is depicted as a saviour or liberator, and his invasion as an altruistic act that rescues the country from the yoke of Stuart 'popery' and 'tyranny'.[54] The defence of the Protestant Anglican church was a crucial dimension of the revolutionary conflict,

[48] Joseph Hone, *Literature and Party Politics at the Accession of Queen Anne* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 16.
[49] See for example, John Dennis' *The Monument*, and John Hughes' *The House of Nassau* (1702).
[50] See Foxon, *English Verse,* 2:300.
[51] Hone, *Literature*, 20-21.
[52] See Williams, *Literary Culture*, 93-103.
[53] Ibid., 96.
[54] Ibid., 102.

and William legitimized his assumption of power in his guise as a divinely ordained Protestant saviour of the nation. Thus the political and military success of this Protestant prince was configured by Whig panegyrists as evidence of divine intervention in support of the Protestant church.[55] Concurrently, Whig poets were also concerned with forging a new and distinctively Whiggish poetic aesthetic as part of their post-Revolution modernizing project to reform British literature and culture. Central to this reformist programme was the drive to assert the 'liberty' of poetry from the influence exerted by a classical and Royalist past, thus extending the revolution principles of 1688 into the realm of poetry.[56] Williamite panegyric verse sought to repudiate classical machinery in favour of native and Christian literary models deemed more appropriate to a constitutional monarchy and the exigencies of the Revolution. Richard Blackmore, the Whig writer and physician, explains how the '*Liberty of Poetry'* had been constrained by the needless influence of classical poets, and asserts the need to 'set up for an *Original* in *Writing* in a way accommodated to the *Religion, Manners,* and other *Circumstances* we are now under'.[57]

Thus a 1694 poem by Joseph Addison explicitly relegates classical poetic precedents by privileging William's victory at the Boyne over the famous rivers of Homer's *The Illiad*, '*Simois'* and 'rapid *Xanthus*', which 'Shall [no] longer be the Poet's highest themes'.[58] In his panegyric on William's accession, the newly appointed Whig poet laureate, Thomas Shadwell, links William's conquest with a restoration of liberty: 'H' [*sic*] *Invaded* us with *Force*, to make us *free*'.[59] Invoking the glorious pre-history of Elizabethan England, Shadwell depicts William's victory as a rescue of the nation from the political decline of the Stuart era, the latter seen as the apex of monarchical tyranny which '[t]urned Kings to *Tyrants*, and to *slaves* the free'.[60] William's success is presented as a providential act legitimized by God: '*Inspir'd* by *Heav'n*, thus the *Great Orange said,*/ let there be

[55] Ibid., 108.
[56] See Womersley, *Augustan*, xxii.
[57] Richard Blackmore, preface to *A Paraphrase on the Book of Job* (London, 1700).
[58] Joseph Addison, *An Account of the Greatest English Poets* in *The Miscellaneous Works of Joseph Addison*, ed. A.C. Guthkelch (London: Bell, 1914), 1:35.
[59] Thomas Shadwell, *A Congratulatory Poem on His Highness the Prince of Orange* [etc] (London, 1689), 7.
[60] Ibid., 3.

*liberty*, and was obey'd'.[61] In another ode, Shadwell emphasizes William's role as the restorer of the nation's laws and privileges: 'The Prince for us, was born to make us free […] Thou has restor'd our Laws their force again'.[62] Similarly, in his *Epistle to Dorset* (1690), Charles Montagu, the dedicatee of Egerton's 1703 volume, configures the king as a 'Deliverer' who was 'Born to subdue insulting Tyrants Rage,' and provide 'Relief from those Oppressors of Mankind'.[63] Other panegyrists drew upon the idiom of chivalric romance to cast William in the role of the knight errant who saves Britain from the yoke of Stuart tyranny, thus linking the 'virtuous' act of his conquest and a sense of its 'marvellous' and extraordinary circumstances.[64] Jonathan Swift's 'Ode to the King on His Irish Expedition' (1691) conceives the King's victorious Irish campaign as a romance rescue of his native country, in which William 'like a Bold Romantick Knight/ Rescu'd her from the Giant's Fort'.[65] In a panegyric of 1689, John Dennis lauds William as a heroic saviour who 'realiz'd the old *knights Errantry*'.[66]

Egerton's tribute to William idealizes the King in strikingly similar terms to that of Whig laudatory verse. William is cast in the familiar template of a heroic warrior-king: an 'undaunted Warrior', the 'mighty Victor' and a 'God of Arms' (p.112). In an analogy with the classical figures of Ammon and Caesar, the poem creates an epic frame of reference for William's outstanding military feats; at the same time it displays a Whiggish imperative to eschew classical models, by asserting the King's superiority over 'avaricious' heroes of old:

> *Ammon*'s nor *Cesar*'s Fame, must here contend,
> The Valour had an avaricious End,
> Thy fought to win the World, he to defend.
> *Britannia*'s Wrongs his willing Aid demand,
> He hazards all, to save the sinking Land. (p.111)

Egerton's dismissal of classical machinery is grounded in Whiggish conceptions of the King's virtues: in contrast to heroes of antiquity solely driven by ambition for power, William is posited as the

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[61] Ibid., 7.
[62] Thomas Shadwell, *Ode on the Anniversary of the King's Birth* (London, 1690), 2.
[63] Charles Montagu, *Epistle to Dorset* [etc] (London, 1690), 3.
[64] See Williams, *Literary Culture*, 100.
[65] Jonathan Swift, *The Poems of Jonathan Swift*, ed. Harold Williams (Oxford: Clarendon, 1956), 1:7.
[66] John Dennis, *An Ode upon the Glorious and Successful Expedition* [etc] (London, 1689), 4.

nation's saviour, who 'hazards all' to lend 'his willing Aid' and reverse *'Britannia*'s Wrongs'. Egerton's description of Britain as a 'sinking Land' recalls Whig depictions of the country's political decline under the Stuart yoke, as in Shadwell's description of Britain as a '*drooping Land*', where 'The *Subjects* were *their Stock upon the Ground.*/ at length, to rivet on the *Chains* we wore'.[67] Egerton configures William's invasion of Britain in the Whig trope of a rescue: 'Not thirst of Empire, Mankind to inslave,/ Nor fights so much to Conquer, as to save' (p.112). Her poem also incorporates a romance trope with William cast as a virtuous knight, 'Led by a tenderness his Courage moves'' (p.112), and Britain personified as a helpless maiden: 'the defenceless Isles, Impatient wait,/ And look from him, as Heaven their Nations fate' (p.112). As in the customary Whig conception of his success as a sign of divine providence, William's military victories are underscored as directed by 'Heaven': 'Boldly he march'd to dare th' oppressing Foe,/ No Conquests fear'd, when Heaven directs the Blow;' (p.112).

In a dramatic account of the King's victory over James II at the Battle of the Boyne, Egerton displays a deft handling of the central Whiggish tropes of war and heroism:

> In vain the *Boyne* would Victory delay,
> Nor can its Streams their generous Heat allay;
> Boldly they Plunge the bright propitious Flood,
> And in the Waves like arm'd *Tryton* stood.
> The amphibious Squadrons charge upon their Foes,
> Nor in the Liquid Plain their ardour loose:
> But with united force the Fight persue,
> Till laurels load the daring Monarch's brow. (p.113)

Egerton's treatment of William's triumph at the Boyne of 1690, an event which assumed a cult status for Whig writers, incorporates many of the thematic and stylistic features of a nascent Whig poetics. Plunging 'Boldly' into the Boyne's 'generous Heat', the King seems to assume the elemental power of the river's 'bright propitious Flood'. The forces of his 'amphibious Squadrons' are indiscernible from the ferocious energy of the river torrents: 'And in the Waves like arm'd *Tryton* stood./ The amphibious Squadrons charge upon their foes'. This configuring of the King as an unstoppable force of nature echoes Andrew Marvell's imaging of Oliver Cromwell as a terrifying apocalyptic power in

[67] Shadwell, *Congratulatory Poem*, 6, 4.

'An Horatian Ode' (1650). The same explosive revolutionary energies are depicted in Whig verse of William's era; Montagu's *Epistle to Dorset* compares William battling at the Boyne to a powerful torrential deluge: 'The roaring deluge, rushing headlong on/ sweeps cities in its course, and bears whole forests down […] And he, like the tenth wave, drove on the rest'.[68] Similarly, Elizabeth Singer Rowe's panegyric to William configures the King as the forces of an 'Angry *Torrent*':

> Among the thickest of his Foes he Rode;
> And like an Angry *Torrent* forc't his way
> Through all the Horrors that in Ambush lay.[69]

In all these images, William emerges as an irresistible force of nature; a figure who combines martial heroism with the revolutionary qualities of dynamism, energy and upheaval. The figuring of the King as an apocalyptic force of nature also invites comparisons with the important Whig poetic mode of the heroic sublime, to which we will return in my discussion of Egerton's panegyric to the Duke of Marlborough. Here I offer a close comparison of Egerton's poem with the aforementioned panegyric by the Whig woman writer, Elizabeth Singer Rowe, who celebrates the same military victory in her 'Upon King William's passing the Boyn' (1696).

That Egerton was familiar with Rowe's address to William is suggested by echoes between their two poems. Egerton's reference to William's 'amphibious Squadrons' repeats Rowe's correspondingly 'Hostile Squadrons' (p.32), and the weeping '*Neried*[s]' (p.114) of Egerton's elegy directly inverse Rowe's 'smiling *Naides*' (p.32) who greet William's arrival at the Boyne. Rowe's panegyric features in Prescott's reading of Rowe's political poetry, which compares the poem to Blackmore's later work, *Advice to the Poets* (1706).[70] A comparison between Rowe's and Egerton's poetic tributes, however, brings out the different ways in which women writers respond to problematic masculinist tropes of war and heroism. The violence inherent in depictions of military glory makes war a distinctly unfeminine topic for a woman writer; yet this dilemma needs to be

[68] Montagu, *Epistle*, 7.
[69] Elizabeth Singer Rowe, 'Upon King William's passing the Boyn, &c,' in *Poems on Several Occasions Written by Philomela* (London, 1696), 31. Subsequent references are to this edition.
[70] Prescott, 'Rowe,' 173-99.

negotiated if she is to adequately give voice to William's heroic status.[71] Rowe expresses misgivings about the ability of her female voice to fully articulate the violence on the battlefield: 'Too soft's my Voice the *Hero* to express […] Or, speak him Acting in the dreadful Field,' (pp.11-13). Egerton adopts a similar trope (albeit coupled with her grief at the King's death) but with a 'Pious' determination to complete her task: 'With untun'd Lyre, and slacken'd Nerves I Sing,/ Yet with a Pious hast, my humble Tribute bring […] But oh! what Pen can worthy Trophies raise' (p.111).

In the historical battle of the Boyne, the Jacobite army assembled behind the natural barrier of the river, into which William's forces boldly charged, forcing their opponents into retreat and subsequent defeat. Rowe's poem commemorating the event, however, leaves the King poised on the river banks, with the speaker declining to follow William into action and even entreating him to 'stay' to preserve his 'Sacred' life:

> No more – ah stay – though in a cause so good;
> 'Tis pitty [*sic*] to expend that Sacred Blood.
> Why wilt thou thus the boldest Dangers seek. (pp.30-33)

Prescott points out that this earned Rowe the criticism of her 'Athenian' colleagues, who decried her lack of engagement with the battle which was seen as key to fully articulate the extent of William's glory.[72] As we have seen, Egerton does not hold back from depicting the charge of William's 'amphibious Squadrons' into the Boyne; yet she too eschews the images of violence central to the bloodthirsty panegyrics of William's reign by her male contemporaries. Joseph Addison, for example, graphically depicts the same battle as 'the *Boyn* run thick with Human gore,/ And floating Corps lye beating on the shore'.[73] In Egerton's account, William's military power is evoked as an irresistible force of nature, which effectively dramatizes the apocalyptic nature of the conflict without the need to provide disturbing details of the actual slaughter. In another poem, Rowe was to find an original solution to the problematic notion of martial violence through the employment of biblical motifs which enabled her to dramatize the savagery of military action whilst assuming a pious and detached

[71] Ibid., 178-9.
[72] Ibid., 180-1.
[73] Joseph Addison, *A Poem to His Majesty* in *Works*, 1:41.

perspective.[74] In Egerton's elegy, the speaker displays a similar female eagerness to distance herself from the violent scene at the Boyne when the stanza immediately concludes on a pacific note, with William projected as a magnanimous victor; his sword, paradoxically, is posited as a source of 'Succour':

> Soon as the Land was safe his Weapons cease,
> With his Victorious Hand, he seal'd their Peace;
> Mourn all ye injur'd Realms your helpless Cause,
> No Sword can Succour you like Kind *Nassaus*. (p.113)

Egerton's dramatic account of William's glorious exploits on the Boyne concludes with a somewhat surprising image of the battle-hardy warrior-king as a pacific and 'Kind' personage. Indeed, William is lauded throughout the poem not only for his martial qualities but for his humane virtues: a 'generous Prince' (p.112) and 'kind Nassau', whose feats of heroism are 'led by a Tenderness' (p.112). As discussed in the chapter on Trotter's *Revolution*, the publication of Steele's *The Christian Hero* heralded an impulse by Whig writers from 1701 onwards to project their heroes as highly virtuous men, in contrast to earlier post-Revolution templates in which courage and military valour are paramount. The impact of this transformation in the heroic model on Whig poetics will be fully explored in my reading of the panegyrics of Catharine Trotter – her society's articulate female proponent of virtue and morality. But as we have seen, Egerton's address, published early in the reign of Anne, also registers this new emphasis on a hero's humane virtues.

Egerton's elegy concludes with 'widdow'd *Belgia*' (p.113) and 'sad *Britain*' (p.113) weeping – their tears 'swell[ing] the gentle *Boyne* [...who] will no more her sporting Waters heave' (p.113) – memorializing the famed site of William's heroism and mourning his loss in the two lands over which he ruled. However, the poem is left curiously incomplete, with truncated images of weeping '*Neried*[s]' and '*Trytons*' (p.114). This begs the question: why did Egerton produce a commendable example of Whig heroic verse lauding the memory of an ideal warrior-king only to leave the work incomplete? The elegy to William is the only poem in Egerton's volume left unfinished and I can find no evidence of any other elegy to William published in an incomplete form. Perhaps Egerton's

[74] Elizabeth Singer Rowe, '*A* Pindarick POEM *on* HABBAKUK,' in *Poems*, 18-21. For Rowe's employment of biblical motifs, see Prescott, 'Rowe,' 182-4.

poem's incomplete status, as in Rowe's refusal to depict William's charge into the Boyne, manifests a compromised female poetic agency in its venture into the masculinist mode of militant heroic poetry. Yet as we have seen, Egerton exhibits a deft handling of the motifs and style of Whig panegyric verse. It is worth noting that the poem is truncated not at the scenes of military action but in an episode dramatizing national mourning and loss as symbolized by the weeping lands, river and nereids. Jahan Ramazani explains that elegies are a form of recuperative art that makes sense of death and loss through subsequent acts of 'closure, rebirth and substitution'.[75] Egerton's elegy appears to show a disrupted process of mourning which is unable to achieve closure as registered in its incomplete ending. While Egerton pays homage to the figure of William to memorialize his national and political achievements, it is my contention that the incomplete, provisional nature of her tribute is grounded in her provisional acceptance of Whig notions of political liberty that William's reign and achievements represent. For Egerton, the early-modern feminist, her identification with William, the Whig hero of the Glorious Revolution, is compromised by the perceived exclusion of women from the Revolution's liberating possibilities. This is further illuminated in Egerton's 'The Emulation' – a vocal proto-feminist poem which articulates Egerton's objections to the exclusion of women from the freedoms of a post-Revolution age.

**'The Emulation' (1703)**

As with much of Egerton's *oeuvre*, this feminist verse manifesto is often approached as a form of autobiography. Marilyn Williamson emphasizes Egerton's difficult marriage to her second husband, Thomas Egerton, contending that this 'relationship seems to have inspired one of the most outspoken poems about women's condition in the seventeenth century, "The Emulation"'.[76] Jeslyn Medoff makes the same assertion that Egerton's 'unhappiness in finding herself once again married obviously inspired [this] extraordinary poem'.[77] Hilda Smith adopts a more considered approach, comparing the work to other feminist polemics within the context of seventeenth-century Natural

[75] Jahan Ramazani, *Poetry of Mourning: The Modern Elegy from Hardy to Heaney* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 8.
[76] Williamson, *Voices*, 162.
[77] Medoff, 'New Light', 168

Philosophy and Cartesian rationalism.[78] But Smith too ignores the party political content of Egerton's poem in her claim that contemporary political ideology and rhetoric 'proved unhelpful to nascent feminism'.[79] Rebecca Mills considers 'The Emulation' alongside other contemporary feminist works to highlight the politically-inflected language of Egerton's poem; however Mills ignores the significance of Egerton's Whiggish sympathies, arguing that 'Augustan women writers adapted the rhetoric of Whig partisan politics in their polemical, protofeminist texts in order to highlight both the shortcomings of Whig logic and the inequalities between men and women'.[80] There has been little interest in early feminism from a Whig woman writer's perspective. And while scholars have explored the dialogue between the feminist polemics of Mary Astell and Judith Drake and the ideological tracts of John Locke and James Tyrell, there has been little or no scholarly attention paid to Whig panegyric verse as a resource for early feminism.[81] Seventeenth-century proto-feminism arose from a complex inheritance of theological, intellectual and ideological currents; my reading of Egerton's poetry seeks to illuminate an overlooked dimension of early feminism in the enabling themes and motifs of post-Revolution Whig verse.

'The Emulation' is redolent with the political vocabulary of the Revolution, deploying and reworking the language and imagery of Whig verse (in which we know Egerton exhibited a keen interest) to achieve feminist aims. Egerton draws upon the Williamite themes of liberty and deliverance celebrated in her address to the King to lay sexual political claims to the freedoms of a post-Revolution Britain. If Egerton's command of Whig heroic poetry is an attempt to inscribe herself onto the dominant literary practice of a nascent Whig culture, 'The Emulation' embodies her efforts to inscribe herself onto the new historical and political formulation upon which this culture is based, drawing upon the same enabling themes and motifs of Whig laudatory verse to assert the place of women in a new political order.

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[78] Smith, *Reason's Disciples*, 177-87.
[79] Ibid., 57.
[80] Rebecca Mills, '"That Tyrant Custom": The Politics of Custom in the Poetry and Prose of Augustan Women Writers,' *Women's Writing* 7, no. 3 (2000): 391.
[81] See Patricia Springborg, *Mary Astell: Theorist of Freedom from Domination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); and Hannah Smith, 'English "Feminist" Writings and Judith Drake's *An Essay in Defence of the Female Sex* (1696),' *Historical Journal* 44, no. 3 (September 2001): 727-47.

The poem's ambiguous title is a clue to its underlying intentions. In the early modern era, 'emulation' takes on the secondary meaning of a grudge against the superiority of others, in this case representing Egerton's grievances against the freedoms of a post-Revolution age from which women are excluded.[82] One of the earliest poetic comparisons of women to slaves, the work adopts the politically-resonant vocabulary of Revolution panegyrics, applying images of 'slavery' and 'tyranny' with which the Stuart regime had been charged, to dramatize the subjugation of women:[83]

> From the first dawn of Life, unto the Grave,
> Poor womankind's in every State, a Slave.
> The Nurse, the Mistress, Parent and the Swain,
> […] Then comes the last, the fatal Slavery,
> The Husband with insulting Tyranny
> Can have ill Manners justfy'd by Law;
> For Men all join to keep the Wife in awe. (p.108)

A comparison of the poem with Thomas Shadwell's post-Revolution tribute to William reveals Egerton's feminist reworking of Whig panegyric verse. As in Shadwell's depiction of the 'state' of Britain under the yoke of Stuart rule, which 'Turned Kings to *Tyrants*, and to *slaves* the free',[84] Egerton argues that women in 'every State' are continuously subjected to oppression and 'insulting Tyranny'. The term 'State' has clearly political connotations reconfigured here into figures of social oppression – the nurse, schoolmistress, parent, and husband – who constrain every stage of women's lives. As in Shadwell's resonant image of the perceived victims of Stuart tyranny, '*Subjects* [who] were *their Stock upon the Ground.*/ at length, to rivet on the *Chains* we wore', Egerton depicts women as trapped in a condition of perpetual and 'fatal Slavery'.[85] While the Glorious Revolution is interpreted by Shadwell as reinstating the country's ancient constitution and laws, 'restor'd our Laws their force again', women in Egerton's account continue to be subject to social and marital

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[82] *A Shakespeare Glossary* defines 'emulate' as 'Ambitious or jealous rivalry, contention between rivals or factions'; *A Shakespeare Glossary*, 2nd ed., s.v. 'emulate'.

[83] Egerton's employment of the terms 'slavery' and 'tyranny' echoes contemporary feminist prose polemics. As Mary Astell famously inquired in *Reflections Upon Marriage* (1706): 'If *all Men are born free*, how is it that all Women are born slaves?'; Astell, *Political Writings*, 18.

[84] Shadwell, *Congratulatory Poem*, 3.

[85] Ibid., 4.

inequalities 'justify'd by Law'.[86] Set against Egerton's tribute to 'Great *William*' which casts his victory over James II as a political and literary triumph, 'The Emulation' reconfigures the Glorious Revolution on gendered terms to depict women as on the losing side of the Revolution, thus drawing attention to their exclusion from its liberating possibilities. Drawing upon the politically-charged language of the Revolution, Egerton aligns the subjugation of women with James II's overthrow in 1688:

> We yield like vanquish'd Kings whom Fetters bind,
> When chance of War is to Usurpers kind,
> Submit in Form; but they our Thoughts control,
> And lay restraints on the impassive Soul. (p.108)

James II, the 'vanquish'd King', defeated by William, the Whig hero of the Boyne, was 'fettered' by his Catholicism and the unpopular 'Tyranny' of his reign.[87] Fearing the 'chance of War' against the military strength of William, James passively 'yield[s]' and flees to the sanctuary of France, enabling a bloodless usurpation of his throne.[88] Similarly, women are 'fettered' by 'Tyrant Custom' (p.108) and man-made Laws in a state of 'fatal Slavery' (p.108); their rights, both physical and intellectual, usurped by men with 'insulting Tyranny'. The use of the term 'usurper' in an analogy with William might be surprising given Egerton's Whig loyalties; however Egerton can be seen to deploy the common Jacobite charge against William in order to dramatize the perceived injustice of male annexation of women's rights to physical and intellectual freedom. Egerton depicts the oppression of women, who 'Submit in Form; but they'd our Thoughts control,/ And lay restraints on the impassive Soul' (p.109). The words 'Submit' and 'impassive' recall the Tory code of passive obedience which from a Whiggish perspective had allowed the tyranny of the State to perpetuate under Stuart rule; the reference to 'Soul' alludes to Protestant beliefs on the equality of the soul, which underpin one of the major arguments for gender equality in the period.[89]

Using an analogy of Christian religious mysteries, Egerton depicts women as trapped in a state of ignorance, excluded from the spheres of learning and intellect:

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[86] Ibid., 2
[87] This parallel was first observed by Mills; Mills, 'Tyrant Custom,' 404.
[88] Ibid.
[89] On how Protestant assertions of the equality of the soul underpins arguments for gender equality, see Staves, *Literary History*, 101.

> They fear we should excel their sluggish Parts,
> Should we attempt the Sciences and Arts.
> Pretend they were design'd for them alone,
> So keep us Fools to raise their own Renown;
> Thus Priests of old their Grandeur to maintain,
> Cry'd vulgar Eyes would sacred Laws Prophane.
> So kept the Mysteries behind a Screen,
> There Homage and the Name were lost had they been seen. (p.109)

Egerton compares the exclusion of women from 'the Sciences and Arts' with the way in which priests of ancient religious mysteries conceal and protect their sacred knowledge from 'vulgar Eyes'. But the reference to 'Priests of old' also has strong connotations of the 'popish' priests of the Stuart era, condemned in Whig panegyrics for enhancing the tyranny of kings. Shadwell, for example, harkens back to the glorious age of 'the great *Eliza*' destroyed by the ambitions of '*haughty*', '*Popish*' priests:

> Long might such happiness have been enjoy'd,
> Had it not been by *Ambitious* Priests destroy'd.
> Those *haughty Priests* could not contented be
> With what remain'd from *Popish Dignity.*[90]

Similarly, William Walsh's eulogy to William compares Popish priests to a plague of locusts depicted as instruments of arbitrary rule: 'See, Tools of arbitrary Sway,/ And Priests, like Locusts, scour away'.[91] Thus Egerton aligns the oppression of women with one of the key symbols or '[t]ools of arbitrary' Stuart rule.[92] This is reinforced by her subsequent reference to the empowering possibilities of the new era of post-Revolution Britain:

> But in this blessed Age, such Freedom's given,
> That every Man explains the Will of Heaven;
> And shall we Women now sit tamely by,
> Make no excursions in Philosophy,
> Or grace our Thoughts in tuneful Poetry?
> We will our Rights in Learning's World maintain,
> Wits Empire, now, shall know a Female Reign. (p.109)

Drawing upon the central Whig trope of liberty, Egerton evokes the 'blessed Age' of 'Freedom' and Protestant ascendancy, where 'every Man explains the Will of Heaven', to claim a similar

[90] Shadwell, *Congratulatory Poem,* 3.
[91] William Walsh, *To the Queen, on her coronation day* [etc] (London, 1706), 1. Walsh's encomium to William is embedded in this poetic address to Anne.
[92] Egerton's indictment of priests is also suggestive of a Whiggish anti-clericalism within the Anglican fold, as discussed in my chapter on Trotter's *Revolution*.

agency and license for women. Implicitly alluding to the Whig maxim that oppressed subjects are justified in revolting against a tyrannical monarch, Egerton calls forth a gendered revolution, urging women not to 'sit tamely by' but to assert their 'Rights' in the intellectual realms of Science, Philosophy, and Poetry: 'We will our Rights in Learning's World maintain/ Wits Empire, now, shall know a Female Reign'. The term 'Rights' invokes Whig resistance theory used to justify the Revolution; the 'right to resist' an oppressive governor is reinterpreted by Egerton into women's rights to claim their place in the world of intellect, arts and learning.[93] Egerton finds a resource for feminism in Whig panegyric verse and the political vocabulary of the Revolution, to assert her empowered vision of women in a new political order of liberty and freedom. Her reference to 'a female Reign' alludes to the authority of a female monarch in the age of Anne during which this volume was published. Likewise, Egerton's panegyric to Anne combines her Whig commitments and proto-feminist aims; while her engagement with William was compromised by the perceived limits that Whig liberty held for women under a male figure of political authority, Egerton's tribute to Anne articulates her ebullient hopes for female agency and empowerment during a female reign.

**'To the Queen' (1703)**

Egerton's tribute to Queen Anne appears near the beginning of the 1703 volume, printed on the opposite page to another of her assertive verse polemics, 'The Liberty'. The proximity of the two poems is suggestive of the evocative parallels between Egerton's political and feminist interests. While 'To the Queen' is endowed with the same Williamite motifs of heroic militarism, a comparison between the two tributes to William and Anne reveals a shift in Egerton's depiction of political authority: one is engaged with the post-Revolutionary theme of liberty and deliverance, and the other with the patriotic spirits of a country newly engaged in a global war presided over by a female sovereign.

As Warren Chernaik explains, the genre of royal panegyric projects an image of the ideal monarch, not only for propaganda purposes but to provide royal instructions; in praising a ruler's

[93] See Lois G. Schwoerer, 'The right to resist: Whig resistance theory, 1688 to 1694,' in *Political discourse in Early Modern Britain*, eds. Nicholas Phillipson and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 232-53.

virtues, the poet is often 'recommending a particular course of action or outlook'.[94] As we have seen in my discussion of post-Revolution Whig verse, however, Williamite panegyrics took the propagandist drive to another level, not just to proclaim the virtues of an ideal ruler, but to assert and enable the reformation of an entire code of literature and culture. The accession of Anne posed new challenges to the Whiggish cultural project, in the Queen's partiality towards the Tories and her well-known difficult relations with William during his reign.[95] Joseph Hone points out the highly partisan nature of succession writing on the Queen's accession, arguing that 'Tories made succession panegyric a forward-looking tool for expressing political aspirations in the new reign. Whigs laboured to fashion Anne as a Whig […and] to make Anne the political heir of William III'.[96] Yet while Egerton's panegyric reveals a Whiggish concern to configure the Queen in the heroic image of her predecessor, her tribute to Anne articulates both partisan political and sexual political aspirations, adapting and refashioning the martial idiom of Whig panegyric verse to achieve feminist aims.

Egerton's address to Anne should be considered in relation to contemporary representations of the Queen, which during the course of her reign were complex and changing. At the point of her accession, Anne cultivated the image of a warrior queen or leader of Amazons, in an attempt to emulate Elizabeth I, as a courageous female sovereign and stalwart defender of the Protestant church.[97] Anne adopted Elizabeth's motto, *semper eadem* or 'always the same'.[98] The spectacle of her coronation festivities included the figure of a martial queen surrounded by '200 Virgins richly attired, many of them like *Amazons*'.[99] This self-fashioning, however, was compromised by the Queen's physical invalidism and ill-health stemming from her numerous failed pregnancies; this martial representation of Anne waned thereafter, eclipsed by the pre-eminent figure of her general, John Churchill, the Duke of Marlborough.[100] Tory writers focused on the Queen's role as 'mother of

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[94] Warren L. Chernaik, 'Waller's *Panegyric to My Lord Protector* and the Poetry of Praise,' *SEL* 4, no. 1 (Winter 1964): 112.
[95] See Somerset, *Queen Anne*, 199.
[96] Hone, 'Politicising Praise,' 148.
[97] Barash, *Women's Poetry*, 217-8.
[98] Edward Gregg, *Queen Anne* (London: Routledge, 1980), 152.
[99] Abel Boyer, *The History of the Reign of Queen Anne* [etc] (London, 1703), 78.
[100] See Toni Bowers, *The Politics of Motherhood: British Writing and Culture, 1680-1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 76-85.

the Church of England', which not only corresponded to Anne's fervent Anglicanism but 'made her Tory property, an ultimate authority behind the "Church in Danger" propaganda which they relied on throughout the reign'.[101] Another representation of the Queen, linked to Elizabeth I, is that of symbolic mother of the nation, as articulated in the text of Anne's coronation sermon drawn from Isaiah 49:23: 'Kings shall be thy nursing-fathers, and their queens thy nursing-mothers'.[102]

From the variety of images used to engender Anne's authority, Egerton's panegyric adapts the martial iconography of the Queen, repeated and reinforced by the Whiggish tropes of heroism and war. The poem begins with an act of homage to the Queen, expressed in a voice which asserts its right to speak, but nevertheless betrays a sense of anxiety about performance:

> My trembling Muse, with awful Duty press,
> Mong'st kneeling crouds, with thy unfeign'd Address;
> Since meanest Slaves, to Altars may repair,
> With sacred Rites, of Sacrifice and Prayer.
> […] Bless'd with such hopes, my Muse, with Prostrate Zeal,
> Dare at the Feet of her great Sovereign kneel. (p.17)

Pushing past the humbly 'kneeling crouds', Egerton's brave but 'trembling Muse' presses forward audaciously to '[d]are at the Feet of her great Sovereign kneel'; the assertive nature of her homage evident in the paradoxical phrase, 'Prostrate Zeal'. Egerton seems to allude to the Queen's famous speech of May 1702, asserting her defence of the Anglican Church 'that will incline me to countenance those who have the truest zeal to support it'.[103] As if responding to a call to arms, Egerton makes her 'Zeal' evident, and as one of the ranks of the Queen's 'Bolder' subjects she is drawn to the protection and 'Sanctuary' of her court: 'Goodness like yours aws the Bolder sort,/ As makes a Sanctuary of your Court.' (p.17). The Queen's speech had inspired Tories, who cast it as Anne's expressed support for their drive to restrict toleration of Dissenters, the latter a cornerstone of Whig policy, which was effected early in William and Mary's reign.[104] In Egerton's poem, however,

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[101] Williams, *Literary Culture*, 138.
[102] See Bowers, *Motherhood*, 65-75.
[103] See *London Gazette*, May 25-28, 1702.
[104] Under the Toleration Act of 1689, Protestant Nonconformists were exempted from prosecution for their beliefs as long as they took the oath of the allegiance to the Crown; however they were still subject to the Test and Corporation Acts, which technically prevented them from holding public office.

this 'Zeal' is reinterpreted on Whiggish terms, when Egerton's reply to the royal call to arms is developed into military action to protect the country, and implicitly the Church, from their foreign, Catholic enemies on the Continent. Egerton makes explicit the identity of these 'proud Foes':

> Heaven be propitious to my Monarch's Arms,
> And make them as Victorious, as her Charms,
> Revenge on your proud Foes, their *Salick* Law,
> With your fair Hand, their boasted Greatness awe. (p.18)

The phrase 'Monarch's Arms' takes on a double meaning, referring to an embracing affection between the Queen and her people, as well as Anne's military role in the War of the Spanish Succession (1702-13), whose opening campaign began early in her reign in May 1702. But although the Queen was the presiding monarch over Britain's military efforts, the foundations of the war had been laid by William, whose Continental policy dictated the country's involvement in the conflict.[105] Egerton adopts the customary panegyric method of 'teaching by praise' – couching her policy appeals within praise for the Queen. By valorising Anne as a warrior queen, battling against the nation's 'proud Foes', Egerton is lauding the war efforts, urging the Queen to continue the Williamite policies of resisting French power on the Continent. This impulse to encourage the Queen to emulate her predecessor's military programme is apparent in other Whig panegyrics. William Walsh's poetic tribute to Anne begins with an extended encomium to William, the 'Great *Nassau*'; the poem subsequently conceives the transfer of power from William to Anne as the latter inheriting the late King's continental strategies:[106]

> She shall Domestick Foes unite,
> Monarchs beneath her Flags shall fight,
> Whole Armies drag her Chain;
> […] And give a King to *Spain*.[107]

A panegyric by Lady Mary Chudleigh, a Whiggish woman writer from a Puritan background[108] urges

[105] See Harris, *Politics*, 159.
[106] Walsh, *To the Queen*, 1.
[107] Ibid., 2.
[108] Chudleigh had previously been mistakenly identified as a Tory/Royalist sympathizer; however research by Olive and Mills correctly assert her Whiggish leanings. See Barbara Olive, 'A Puritan Subject's Panegyrics to Queen Anne,' *SEL* 42, no. 3 (Summer 2002): 475-99; and Rebecca M. Mills, "'Thanks for that Elegant *Defense*": Polemical Prose and Poetry by Women in the Early Eighteenth Century' (DPhil. thesis, University of Oxford, 2000), 72-81.

Anne to '[t]read in [William's] steps whom Fate has snatch'd away,/ Like him the Terror of Your Arms display'.[109] Chudleigh echoes the familiar post-Revolution Whig figuration of William, in her fashioning of Anne as a saviour and deliverer of the nation from absolutism and 'tyranny': 'Tis You are born Mankind to free,/ From arbitrary Sway, and hateful Tyranny'.[110] The belligerent stance adopted by these Whiggish poems is grounded in the strategic importance to Whig interest of Britain's role in the War of the Spanish Succession. The continental war served to prevent French Catholic domination in Europe and curb the influence of France's Louis XIV; to safeguard the country's trading and commercial interests through maintaining the balance of power on the continent; and most significantly, to protect the Protestant and Hanoverian succession in Britain in the light of Louis XIV's recognition of the Pretender's claims.[111] Despite the Act of Settlement of 1701 to secure the Protestant succession in the year following the death of Anne's young heir, the Duke of Gloucester, Britain's existence as a Protestant state continued to be threatened by the claims of the Catholic Pretender, James Stuart. Yet Egerton's ardent support for military action also conflates her Whiggish jingoism with her feminist interest, when she reconceives the conflict in terms of gender. She calls upon the Queen to inflict 'Revenge' on enemy France by a woman's 'fair Hand' – to punish them not only for their continental ambitions but for their '*Salic* Law', the gender-biased inheritance laws which bar a woman from the throne. Thus political authority converges with gender equality, and the war against an absolutist, Catholic regime is also fashioned as a battle against a political system which discriminates against women. Chudleigh's poem reveals a similar interest in gender equality when it prophesizes a British victory that concludes with Anne ascending the French throne, hence putting an end to the discriminatory Salic law: 'They dare presage, You will Your Pow'r extend,/ And spite of *Salic* Laws, the *Gallick* Throne ascend'.[112]

In Egerton's poem, the interest in subverting the gender roles in conventional panegyric is developed further when Egerton manipulates Anne's iconography to turn the focus of attention to

[109] Mary Chudleigh, 'To the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty,' in *The Poems and Prose of Mary, Lady Chudleigh,* ed. Margaret J. M. Ezell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 85.
[110] Ibid., 86.
[111] Williams, *Literary Culture*, 138.
[112] Chudleigh, *Poems*, 86.

herself, envisioned in romance terms as a champion of the Queen:

> Why are we barr'd, or why I Woman made,
> Whose Sex forbids to Fight, and to Invade,
> Or give my Queen, more than my wish for Aid?
> I shall not tremble, at the Launce or Sword,
> Will strait turn *Amazon*, but speak the Word. (p.18)

Repeating the familiar pleas against gender restrictions in her feminist poems, Egerton condemns social proscriptions that prevent women from participating in military action: 'Why are we barr'd, or why I Woman made,/ Whose Sex forbids to Fight, and to Invade'. Drawing upon both the post-Revolution romance trope of Whig panegyric and Anne's self-representation as a leader of the Amazons, Egerton projects a remarkable vision of herself as a chivalric knight who bears 'Launce' and arms in the service of the Queen. The speaker assumes an assertive first-person 'I' and a masculine, military posture to assert the right to fight: 'I shall not tremble, at the Launce, or Sword,/ Will strait turn Amazon, but speak the Word'. While Egerton's tribute to William memorializes the King as the nation's knightly saviour and deliverer from the distance of a grateful subject, Egerton's identification with a female sovereign, her 'Zeal' to aid the Queen, emboldens her to imagine her own symbolic participation in the masculine sphere of war and heroism.

In the next verse paragraph, Egerton develops her motif of chivalric romance further to assert her claim symbolically to participate in the nations' imperial projects. The images of 'Slaves' and 'Chains' we have seen used to dramatize the victims of both political as well as gender oppression are re-employed to depict the yielding subjects of Britain's future empire:

> For you I'd fight, Mankind from Pole to Pole,
> Till all the Kingdoms, in one Empire meet,
> Then lay the Crown at your Imperial Feet.
> They'd bless the Arms, which did their Realms subdue,
> And hug the Chains, which made them Slaves to you. (p.18)

Recalling the glimpse of Britain's imperial ambitions in 'The Extacy', Egerton's panegyric adopts a prophetic mode customary to the genre, envisioning Britain's future imperial glory: 'Pole to Pole […] all the Kingdoms, in one Empire meet'. The reference to 'Crown…Imperial' alludes to one of the underlying aims of Britain's continental military campaigns: to safeguard its expanding mercantile

and imperial interests by maintaining a balance of power in Europe. As Suvir Kaul explains, William's military and foreign policies, executed in The Nine Years War (1688-97) and The War of the Spanish Succession (1702-13) were designed to 'protect British commercial, economic, and colonial stakes', and 'every continental diplomatic or military manoeuvre […] held firmly in view, control of trade routes, plantations, and colonies in North America and elsewhere'.[113] Egerton's striking self-imaging as an arms-bearing *'Amazon*' in the service of the Queen is derived from the empowering tropes of war and empire, in her ambitious imaginings of herself as an active participant in Britain's expansionary military action and imperial domination.

Egerton's remarkable vision of a symbolic role for herself beyond the narrow horizons usually prescribed to women is further illuminated by a comparison with her feminist poem, 'The Liberty', whose title is suggestive of the connections that Egerton makes between Whig notions of political liberty and sexual political freedom. The poem represents a forceful plea for social and personal freedom from patriarchal restrictions, centring on the assertion of the privilege of writing; as Medoff asserts, 'The Liberty' 'focuses primarily on women's claims to speak, write, and attend to matters more erudite than those commonly allotted them'.[114] Against the panegyric's fantastical vision of Egerton as a martial heroine battling 'Mankind from Pole to Pole', 'The Liberty' depicts the bleak reality of the limited scope of women's lives, restricted by 'Foolish, dull Trifling, Formality' (p.19). Egerton draws attention to strictures on the female pen confined to the domestic sphere of 'Houswifery' and 'Cookery':

> My Pen if ever us'd imploy'd must be,
> In lofty Themes of useful Houswifery,
> Transcribing old Receipts of Cookery. (p.20)

Drawing on the same combative energies of her panegyric, Egerton's characteristic response to these gender proscriptions is one of militant feminism; like the 'Launce, or Sword' that she wishes to bear in the Queen's service, she wields her pen as a weapon to claim an 'uncheck'd freedom'

[113] Suvir Kaul, *Poems of Nation, Anthems of Empire: English Verse in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Charlottesville; London: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 87.
[114] Medoff, 'Daring Pen,' 52.

beyond the restrictions imposed on her sex:

> My daring Pen, will bolder Sallies make,
> And like my self, an uncheck'd freedom take;
> Not chain'd to the Order of my Sex,
> And with restraints, my wishing Soul perplex. (p.21)

As the militant figuring of her 'daring Pen' and 'bolder Sallies' suggests, the sword serves as a metaphor for the pen. This association is reinforced when we compare the terms upon which Egerton condemns women's exclusion from both military and literary activities in 'To the Queen' and 'The Liberty':

> 'Whose Sex forbids to Fight, and to Invade'. ('To the Queen' in *Poems*, p.18)
>
> 'My Sex forbids, I should my Silence break'. ('The Liberty' in *Poems*, p.20)

Egerton aligns gender proscriptions on military action with those on public writing and speech. By claiming the right symbolically to bear arms in defence of the Queen, she also asserts her right to the privilege of writing: a crucial component of Egerton's demands for female agency and empowerment. While Egerton's identification with the Queen draws on Anne's political legitimacy to authorize her literary and feminist aims, the terms upon which she asserts her claims are energised and informed by her deft manipulations of the Whig trope of military supremacy. We revisit Egerton's feminist poem, 'The Emulation', which concludes with the same empowering theme of imperial supremacy. Whilst in 'The Liberty' we witness military arms substituted with a pen, in 'The Emulation', global domination is transformed into a 'Wits Empire' and the intellectual 'Reign' of women:

> And shall we Women now sit tamely by,
> Make no excursions in Philosophy,
> Or grace our Thoughts in tuneful Poetry?
> We will our Rights in Learning's World maintain,
> Wits Empire, now, shall know a Female Reign. (p.109)

The motif of imperialism is revisioned into a feminocentric literary 'Empire', giving dramatic expression to Egerton's feminist project to assert women's intellectual and personal freedom; the reference to a 'Female Reign' is an allusion to the age of Anne, whose political power serves to

authorize women's literary and feminist aims.

Egerton's poetic tributes to William and Anne assert her legitimacy as a patriotic Whig poet through her command of the martial idiom and rhetorical tropes of Whig panegyric verse. Through exploring these neglected public poems alongside her feminist works, we reach a better understanding of the original ways in which Egerton transforms panegyric conventions to achieve both party political and sexual political objectives, with significant implications for her pro-woman claims.

# 5

## Women writers and the Whig mythologization of Marlborough

This chapter explores women's panegyrics to the Duke of Marlborough, whose brilliant military successes in the War of the Spanish Succession proved a potent theme for a nascent Whig poetics. Women writers' identification with Marlborough has received scant critical attention; yet the Duke was lauded by a number of women in their literary works, notably by those who held Whiggish affiliations.[1] In Mary Pix's comedy, *The Adventures in Madrid* (1706), performed in the year of the Battle of Ramillies, the verse prologue pays tribute to Marlborough: 'our Great Chief upon the Open Plain,/ The Cause of Injur'd Nations does maintain'.[2] Similarly, Pix's political poem supporting the 1707 Act of Union of England and Scotland, crucial to the Whiggish political agenda of safeguarding a Protestant succession, acclaims the Duke as 'the Nation's pride,/ The Great Defender of the Juster side'.[3] Susanna Centlivre too makes her sympathies known in a public poem of 1712, pointedly published just after Marlborough's disgrace and removal from office, in which she effusively praises the Duke and his military ally, Eugene of Savoy: '*Eugene* and *Marlbro',* Names to *Europe* dear,/ True *Heroes* born, and Brothers of the War'.[4]

Catharine Trotter published two panegyrics to the Duke in 1705 and 1706 commemorating his glorious victories at Blenheim and Ramillies.[5] Sarah Fyge Egerton composed a manuscript poem to Marlborough – a strikingly feminine reworking of the heroic sublime celebrating the general's military triumphs of 1708, in which 'prostrate gauls Pave His Triumphant way'.[6] My reading focuses on the panegyrics by Trotter and Egerton, which are the more overt and extended of women writers'

[1] By contrast, the Tory Delarivier Manley scathingly attacked Marborough and his wife in her propagandist works, including in *The New Atalantis* (1709). For a discussion of Manley's satirical attacks on the Marlboroughs, see Carnell, *Biography*, 174-85.

[2] Mary Pix, prologue to *The Adventures in Madrid* (London, 1706).

[3] Mary Pix, *A Poem Humbly Inscrib'd to the Lords Commissioners for the Union of the Two Kingdoms* (London, 1707), 3.

[4] Susanna Centlivre, 'To his Illustrious Highness Prince Eugene of Savoy,' appended to *The Perplex'd Lovers* (London, 1712), 57. Subsequent references are to this edition.

[5] Trotter's panegyrics are: *A Poem on His Grace the Duke of Marlborough's return from his German expedition* (1705); and *On his Grace the Duke of Marlborough, after his victory at Ramellies, in 1706* (1706).

[6] Sarah Fyge Egerton, 'The Essay Address'd to the Illustrious prince and Duke of Marlboro after the long Campaigne 1708,' (unpublished manuscript, 1708), MS EL 8796, Henry E. Huntington Library, California, 1. Subsequent references are to this manuscript copy.

tributes to Marlborough, setting these works within the context of an emergent Whig poetics and the bitter partisan struggles surrounding the great event of the decade: the war on the Continent.

**John Churchill, the Duke of Marlborough (1650-1722)**

As we have seen, the accession of the Tory Anne proved problematic for Whig propagandists, who laboured to fashion the Queen as William's political heir. The emergence of John Churchill, the Duke of Marlborough, as the towering hero of the war on the Continent proved a compelling focal point for Whig writers, who keenly appropriated Marlborough's military achievements as specifically Whiggish victories.[7] We witness a staggering number of poetic tributes to Marlborough in the period, commemorating the Duke's splendid victories in the epic battles of Blenheim (1704), Ramillies (1706), Oudernarde (1708) and Malpaquet (1709). Robert D. Horn's magisterial survey of panegyrics to Marlborough estimates that almost 600 tributes to the Duke were produced in a variety of genres, including poetry, satire and biographical accounts.[8]

This is not to say that only Whigs lauded Marlborough's triumphs on the Continent; war was a partisan effort and the Duke's success was widely celebrated in all quarters, at least in the early years of the war. However, there is a keen distinction in the content, style and emphasis of war panegyrics by Whig and Tory writers. Whigs were keen promoters of the continental war driven by their overriding objective to curb French Catholic domination in Europe and secure the Protestant and Hanoverian succession. Tories, who formed the majority in the Commons at the onset of war, certainly did not oppose the war efforts in the early stages of its progress. However, they stressed a 'blue-water' naval policy which would draw the focus away from protecting Holland (England's former rivals and birthplace of the late William III), and mitigate the putative cost of the war, but opposed what they considered to be costly continental entanglements in the extensive land campaign promoted by Marlborough and the Whigs.[9] As military conflict progressed and costs rapidly mounted, Tories, who were largely supported by landed interests, deeply resented the hikes in land taxes to

[7] See Williams, *Literary Culture*, 139-40.
[8] Robert D. Horn, *Marlborough: A Survey. Panegyrics, Satires and Biographical Writings, 1688-1788* (Kent: Dawson, 1975), viii.
[9] See Somerset, *Queen Anne*, 196-7.

fund the war, which were not correspondingly levied on the monied interest who comprised the Whig power base.[10]

Marlborough too elicited differing responses from Whigs and Tories, and these differences grew more marked as the war progressed and Marlborough (and his partner in government, Lord Godolphin) drew increasingly closer to the Junto Whigs, in order to secure support for the funding of the war.[11] Ostensibly a political moderate, Marlborough's career was marked by shifting political allegiances and the Duke was a figure of suspicion for many Tories. High Tories never forgave him for abandoning James II, his former patron, at the onset of the Glorious Revolution of 1688, and the Duke's powerful wife, Sarah Churchill, was despised by Tories for her ardent Whig loyalties and political influence over the Queen.[12] Tory poetic tributes to Marlborough are mitigated by effusive praise for Queen Anne, who is often presented as the overall director of the war efforts, and by compliments to other military leaders who commanded the country's naval campaigns.[13] By contrast, the Whigs singularly embraced the Duke who had become a cult Whig hero by the early 1700s: a deliverer of the nation from France's Catholic forces on the Continent and whose victories endorsed their own political strategies and aims.[14] Marlborough's heroic status was sealed by his resounding defeat of the French at the Bavarian village of Blenheim in August 1704, a battle Daniel Defoe effusively describes as 'a very great Action, the Greatest, most Glorious, and most Compleat Victory that I can find in History for above 200 Years past'.[15] Defoe's enthusiasm for Marlborough's successes is correspondingly manifested in his verse eulogies to the Duke: *A Hymn to Victory* (1704), and *The Double Welcome. A Poem to the Duke of Marlbro'* (1705).

Defoe numbered amongst the many Whig literary practitioners who enthusiastically turned to Marlborough's triumphs as a compelling focus for their poetics. Addison's *The Campaign* (1705), with its memorable sublime image of Marlborough as a divine messenger riding 'the whirl-wind', was

[10] Ibid.
[11] Gregg, *Queen Anne*, 196-7.
[12] See John B. Hattendorf, 'Churchill, John, first duke of Marlborough (1650-1722),' in *ODNB* (Oxford University Press, 2004), accessed August 30, 2016, https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:4563/10.1093/ref:odnb/5401.
[13] See Williams, *Literary Culture*, 139-40.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Daniel Defoe, *A review of the affairs of France* 48 (August 19, 1704) in *Defoe's Review*, vol. 1, part 1, 307.

probably the most celebrated of these heroic poems, and exerted a significant influence on the works of his female contemporary, Catharine Trotter.[16] The elevated heroic verse of the 1700s has much in common with the patriotic war poetry of William's reign; both are concerned with capturing in suitably elevated forms the great events of national importance, and asserting a new Whiggish poetic idiom – one which is 'biblical rather than classical, Miltonically sublime, a self-confident affirmation of British national destiny'.[17] Yet war panegyrics in the reign of Anne were also marked by new developments in Whig poetics: the transformation of the heroic template into a less aggressive and more virtue-centred model, and the incorporation of 'politeness' into the heroic mode which moderates the more blatantly jingoistic tone of Williamite Whig verse. Women writers contributed to the evolution of Whig poetry, adapting and refashioning the dominant themes of war and heroism with a distinctively feminine slant. In the next section, I examine the war panegyrics of Catharine Trotter, focusing on her deft reworking of Whig notions of heroism and virtue, which displays striking parallels with those we have observed in her drama.

### 5a 'The Virtuous Soldier': Catharine Trotter's panegyrics to Marlborough

Catharine Trotter paid tribute to Marlborough in two panegyrics published at the height of the war on the continent: *A Poem on His Grace the Duke of Marlborough's return from his German expedition* (1705), and *On his Grace the Duke of Marlborough, after his victory at Ramellies, in 1706* (1706). The Blenheim poem was published in December 1705, a year after Marlborough's remarkable victory at Blenheim in August 1704 and in the midst of an outpouring of literary tributes to the Duke. The second poem celebrates the Battle of Ramillies, a major victory in the 1706 campaign, and was published in the same year that Trotter's heroic tragedy, *The Revolution of Sweden*, with its common interest in war and patriotism, was performed. Trotter's verse tributes were published anonymously in London and reprinted after her death in Thomas Birch's compilation of her

[16] Joseph Addison, *The Campaign*, in *Works*, 1:165. Subsequent references are to this edition and appear parenthetically in the text by line number.
[17] Christine Gerrard, 'Poetry, Politics, and the Rise of Party,' in *A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Poetry*, ed. Christine Gerrard (Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell), 11.

life and works of 1751.[18] Both Trotter's panegyrics were recently reprinted in a collection of early-modern women's political writings, whilst the 1706 poem was republished in an anthology of women's poetry edited by Paula Backscheider and Catherine Ingrassia.[19]

Like Egerton's political poetry and indeed many of the war panegyrics of the eighteenth century, Trotter's tributes to Marlborough have received little scholarly attention. In a rare critical analysis of Trotter's heroic verse, Carol Barash claims that Trotter's 1705 poem 'map[s] out an explicitly male version of public heroism, authorized by the distant but virtuous queen [Anne]'.[20] Barash contends that Trotter presents a highly 'pacific Marlborough, who is governed by the mind of Anne', thus reversing 'the usual division of a female body and a male soul and making Marlborough the expression of the female ''Monarch's Mind'''.[21] Barash's reading, which privileges Anne over Marlborough, supports her thesis on a women's poetic tradition, centring on and legitimized by the political authority of a queen. However, Barash's critique ignores Trotter's political engagement, as well as Trotter's clear identification with the Duke in the poems and her other writings. In the next section, I explore how Trotter's rarely acknowledged connections with the Marlborough circle of family and friends inspired and underpinned her tributes to the Duke.

## Catharine Trotter and the Marlborough circle

Trotter was linked to the Marlborough circle through her brother-in-law, Dr Inglis, who served on the Duke's staff as the army's physician general.[22] Another connection was through Trotter's patron and close confidant, Lady Sarah Piers, whose husband was 'an officer of considerable rank under the duke of Marlborough'.[23] Trotter's extant letters testify to the regular interaction between the Duke and her circle of family and friends. For example, in a letter to Thomas Burnet of Kemnay, Trotter declares: 'I hope to see you about Christmas; for at that time the Duke of *Marlborough* is

[18] Trotter, *Works*, 2:561-4, 2:566-7.
[19] Hilda S. Smith, Mihoko Suzuki and Susan Wiseman, eds., *Women's Political Writings, 1610-1725* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2007), 4:157-62; Paula R. Backscheider and Catherine E. Ingrassia, eds., *British Women Poets of the Long Eighteenth Century: An Anthology* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2009), 426-8.
[20] Barash, *Women's Poetry,* 255.
[21] Ibid.
[22] See Birch, 'Life,' iv.
[23] Ibid., x.

expected, with whom, I hear you think of coming. I suppose you will meet with my brother *Inglis* there, for he is gone with the Duke to *Vienna*, and returns with him'.[24] Trotter's sympathies for the Marlboroughs were underpinned by the constancy of the Duchess' disbursement of the Trotter family pension granted by Queen Anne. As Birch points out, the family pension unpaid since the death of Charles II, was reinstated on the accession of Anne and 'was constantly paid by the duchess of *Marlborough* into the hands of Dr *Burnet*, bishop of *Salisbury,* till the removal of her grace from court' (a reference to Sarah Churchill's dismissal from all her posts at court in 1711).[25] Trotter seems to have been closely enough acquainted with the Marlboroughs to be entrusted with carrying letters for her brother-in-law to Henry St John,[26] the secretary of war, on the Duke's behalf; as she describes in a letter to her husband: 'the Duke of *M*. desired I should go to Mr *St. Xohn* [*sic*] in his name'.[27]

Trotter's sympathies for the Marlboroughs are also publicly declared in her drama. *The Revolution of Sweden* is dedicated to Lady Henrietta Godolphin, Marlborough's daughter and heir, who was married to a son of Lord Godolphin, the Lord High Treasurer. Trotter's praise of Henrietta as 'the Happy and Worthy Cement of two Families' - a pointed reference to Henrietta's close familial links to Marlborough and Lord Godolphin – holds clear partisan inflections.[28] As Loftis points out, the years 1704-5 marked the beginning of the 'High Tory vendetta against Marlborough', and publicly expressed support for Marlborough (and his war government partner, Godolphin) was suggestive of Whiggish allegiances.[29] The politically advantageous marriages of Marlborough's daughters, praised here by Trotter, were a source of resentment for the Tories; while Henrietta married into the powerful Lord Treasurer's family, her sisters – Anne, Elizabeth and Mary – married into other influential

[24] Trotter to Thomas Burnet, 12 November 1705, in Trotter, *Works*, 2:190.
[25] Birch, 'Life,' iv.
[26] Henry St John, later Viscount Bolingbroke, took office with Harley in 1704 as the secretary of war. Although he was a High Tory, St John was known to be an admirer of Marlborough. See H.T. Dickinson, 'St John, Henry, styled first Viscount Bolingbroke (1678–1751),' in *ODNB* (Oxford University Press, 2004), accessed August 5, 2016, https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:4563/10.1093/ref:odnb/24496.
[27] Trotter to Patrick Cockburn, 23 June 1707, in Trotter, *Works*, 2:223.
[28] Trotter, epistle dedicatory.
[29] Loftis, *Politics*, 39.

political families, including those of Junto lords.[30] Henrietta (and each of her sisters) was repeatedly nominated the toast of the Whig Kit-Cat Club, buoyed no doubt by the Kit-Cats' deliberate cultivation of the Duke, as well as her close relations with a prominent member of the club, William Congreve.[31]

Henrietta Godolphin was a long-term paramour of Congreve, Trotter's literary mentor and friend. In the dedication of the play, Trotter singles out Henrietta's mother, Sarah Churchill, when she commends an unspecified 'Honour [that] was publickly done me by the Dutchess of *Marlborough*, and all her Beauteous family' – a likely reference to the alleged attendance of the Marlboroughs at one of her play's performances.[32] The warm praise of the Duchess and her family can be seen as Trotter's public signal of alignment at a time when Sarah Churchill had become the focus of Tory resentment for the Junto and the Whigs.[33] The Duchess' ardent Whiggism and perceived political influence over the Queen earned her vicious attacks from the Tories; Gilbert Burnet recorded a session in parliament when 'some reflected very indecently upon [Sarah Churchill] and many […] virulent things [were said] against her, for indeed she was looked upon by the whole [Tory] party, as the person who had reconciled the Whigs to the Queen, from whom [Anne] was naturally very averse'.[34] While attacking the Duchess had become a key strategy in the Tory propaganda campaign, Trotter's connections with the Marlboroughs also led her into the fray, as in the scandalous claims by Manley in *The New Atalantis* that Trotter (satirized as 'Daphne') had had an illicit affair with the Duke (satirized as 'Count Fortunatus').[35] Although Manley's accusations do not appear to have any basis, they testify to the perceived attachment between Trotter and the Marlboroughs, as well as the bitter partisanship of the period that permeated literary circles and led the Tory Manley, a former friend of Trotter's, to libel the latter in this way.

Trotter provides her own account of the reception of her 1705 panegyric, describing how she

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[30] See Frances Harris, *A Passion for Government: The Life of Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), 82, 97, 110.
[31] See Field, *Kit-Cat*, 110, 142.
[32] Trotter, epistle dedicatory. For the Duchess' attendance at the performance of one of Trotter's play, see this thesis p.76, n37.
[33] As Herman points out, by 1705, Sarah Churchill had developed a public persona independent from her husband and had become a 'particularly hated symbol of the Junto and Whiggery in general in Tory eyes'; Herman, *Business*, 49.
[34] Gilbert Burnet, *Bishop Burnet's History of His Own Time* [etc] (Oxford: Clarendon, 1823), 5:224.
[35] See Manley, *Works*, 2:182-5.

had sent manuscript copies of the poem to the Duke of Marlborough, who replied with great encouragement. As Trotter explains:

> The answer I received was, that the duke, and duchess, and lord treasurer, and several others, had read my verses; that they all liked them, and that those, who were judges of such things, said there were some lines in them better than any that had been written on the subject.[36]

As her account suggests, Trotter's poem was known to prominent members of the administration and was also appraised by them alongside the works of male authors. The support of these officials encouraged her to publish the work albeit anonymously through a bookseller, Benjamin Bragg, in December 1705.[37] As with Trotter's deliberate cultivation of Whig patrons and playwrights to promote her career as a dramatist, here we see her courting the support of powerful ministers prior to the publication of her political verse. Although we have no evidence of any direct financial patronage granted to Trotter apart from, perhaps, the securing of the continued payments of her family pension, Trotter's actions suggest her inclination to participate in the Whig cultural arena through eliciting the support of prominent statesmen. Barash's contention that Trotter's panegyrics merely utilized Marlborough as a vehicle for her identification with Anne is unconvincing when we consider Trotter's clear sympathies for the Marlboroughs and the fulsome praise for the Duke evident in her letters. Trotter explains how her admiration for Marlborough inspired her Blenheim poem:

> The duke of *Marlborough* is as much esteemed for his modest deportment since his return, as for his great actions abroad […] He is indeed every way a truly great man, of which I have such a sense, that I could not forbear paying my little tribute to his merit in some verses on his return from *Germany*, which I sent in writing, doubtful whether I should publish them or not.[38]

That Trotter was also acutely aware of and possibly inspired by her male competitors in the field is evident by the references in her letters to Marlborough's best-known panegyrists, Joseph Addison and John Philips. She observes, possibly with some envy, the patronage that Addison received for his work as when he was appointed a commissioner of appeal on Excise on the death of

[36] Trotter to Thomas Burnet, 19 February 1705, in Trotter, *Works,* 2:191.
[37] For the publication date of Trotter's poem, see Horn, *Marlborough*, 148.
[38] Trotter to Thomas Burnet, 19 February 1705, in Trotter, *Works*, 2:189.

John Locke: 'Mr *Locke's* place is given to Mr *Addison*, (famous for his poetry) and it is said in reward of a poem he has wrote to the duke of *Marlborough* on his last glorious campaign'.[39] Trotter is clearly conscious of the partisanship of poetry of the time, describing how 'most people's judgments are biased in all things by a party, we have our whig and tory poets too, who are accordingly approved or condemned by different sets of men'.[40] She is undoubtedly aware of and makes explicit the party bias of the two competing panegyrists; as she writes of Philips' Tory poetic offering, *Blenheim* (1705): 'Mr *Philips*, who had written in blank verse, and in imitation of *Milton*, is admired by the tories'.[41] Despite her obvious knowledge of the form and style of his poem, Trotter is dismissive of Philips' work alleging that 'I have not read him yet.'[42] She is far more positive about Addison's *The Campaign*, disingenuously claiming that 'I, though not a whig, cannot help liking *Addison*'s poem'.[43] Trotter critiques the poem in some detail: 'His numbers are undoubtedly very harmonious; and, I think, his descriptions are fine, the images beautiful, and the expression for the most part proper and empathic, though here and there it may be a little too turgid'.[44] Trotter's opinion of Addison's panegyric is, in the main, very positive although she criticizes what she considers to be his 'turgid' style, a reference perhaps to the elevated, grandiloquent aspects of the heroic sublime.

Trotter's privately expressed views of Addison's work make an interesting contrast to her unequivocal public praise of Addison in the dedication of her play, *The Revolution of Sweden*. As discussed in the chapter on Trotter's drama, Trotter effusively praises Addison whom she describes as 'an Author, who cou'd so much better do Justice to your Ladyships Family, and Character which I dare only venture Superficially to touch'.[45] Yet behind this customary façade of feminine reticence, Trotter's invocation of Addison is a strategic move to align herself with the leading Whig panegyrist and to mainstream Whig literary circles; she draws upon the authority of patriotic masculine poets to assert her legitimacy to comment on notions of war and heroism both in her drama and poetry. The

[39] Ibid., 2:190.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid., 2:190-1.
[45] Trotter, epistle dedicatory.

dedication also includes a quotation from Addison's *The Campaign*: 'On the Firm Basis of Desert, they rise,/ From long try'd Faith, and Friendship holy Ties'.[46] James Anderson Winn considers this couplet to be inherently Whiggish; as he argues, its reference to Marlborough's meteoric rise perceived to be due to his merits and abilities and not to 'the Crimes, or Follies of a Court' (p.3), is an implication that Britain's strength is grounded in its 'nascent meritocracy', which he considers 'a view of society guided by Whig principles'.[47] Yet Winn does not note the suggestively partisan inflections of the phrase 'Friendship holy Ties'; in the interregnum, for example, friendship circles often embodied shared political (usually Royalist) identities.[48] What Trotter appears to be gesturing to is the way in which political networks and friendships have supported both Marlborough's and Addison's rapid advancements in their respective fields. Trotter alludes to the political patronage, through 'Friendship holy Ties', that both Addison and Marlborough had benefitted from – patronage that Trotter was acutely aware of and had attempted, to some extent, to secure for herself. Clearly Trotter's panegyrics to Marlborough were composed in full awareness of her male competitors in the field, both Whig and Tory, and the networks of patronage that linked politics and literary productions. In the next section, I survey the broad outline of Whig and Tory tributes to Marlborough through a discussion of the two well-known poems by Addison and Philips, before considering Trotter's own encomiums in relation to the partisan literary landscape of the time.

## Partisan Panegyrics: Joseph Addison's *The Campaign* (1705) and John Philips' *Blenheim* (1705)

Joseph Addison's *The Campaign* and John Philips' *Blenheim*[49] are works that demonstrate a clear partisan bias and were commissioned by ministers of the crown with very different propagandist intentions.[50] Addison's Whiggish tribute was commissioned by Lord Godolphin,

[46] Ibid.
[47] James Anderson Winn, *Queen Anne: Patroness of Arts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 384.
[48] See for example, Chalmers, *Women Writers*, 56-104.
[49] John Philips, *Blenheim* [etc] (London, 1705). All references are to this edition.
[50] See Williams, *Literary Culture*, 140-3; John D. Baird, 'Whig and Tory Panegyrics: Addison's *The Campaign* and Philips's *Blenheim* Reconsidered,' *Selected Proceedings from the Canadian Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 16 (1997): 164-77. Trotter's own letters suggest that this bias was well-known in contemporary circles.

Marlborough's partner in the presiding war government. Godolphin's endorsement of Addison and the latter's subsequent reward of a permanent salaried post can be seen as sign that Godolphin and Marlborough's administration was moving away from the High Tories and beginning to work with the Whigs.[51] By contrast, Philips' Tory offering was endorsed by and dedicated to Robert Harley, Speaker of the Commons and Secretary of State for the Northern Department, a key Tory politician who was then a chief advocate for 'moderation'. In addition to the ministerial endorsements with their specific partisan objectives, the poems were naturally coloured by the political bias of their authors. Addison of course was an important Whig writer and cultural ideologue; Philips was a young Oxford scholar and Latinist with Tory affiliations, who came from a non-juring family and moved in Jacobite circles.[52]

As Williams has shown, opposing partisan positions in war panegyrics of Anne's reign are often articulated through the definition of Marlborough's role with regards to the Queen: 'Tory poets explained the duke's victories as a result of Anne's direction of the war, while Whig poets praised the leader himself'.[53] *The Campaign* displays a distinctively Whiggish emphasis on Marlborough in relation to the Tory Anne. While the Queen is praised for endorsing Marlborough's campaign on the Continent – 'On her resolves the western world relies' (35) – the much greater part of the poem is dedicated to narrating the detailed progress of the general's campaign and successes, and to exalting the Duke, who is described as our 'god-like leader' (68), 'Great CHURCHILL' (140), and 'our mighty Chief' (393). At times, Addison's depiction of Marlborough draws upon the language of royal divinity usually reserved for monarchs, an impulse I will explore further later in this section.

The reverse is apparent in Philips' panegyric, in which Marlborough is at times relegated to a 'distant Ensign' (p.21), whilst Anne – 'The Best of Queens' (p.3) – is emphasized as directing the war through 'Her banner'd Legions':

> But That Great ANNE, weighing th' Events of War
> Momentous, in Her prudent Heart, Thee chose,

[51] Winn, *Queen Anne*, 383.
[52] Dustin Griffin, 'Philips, John (1676-1709),' in *ODNB* (Oxford University Press, 2004), accessed October 2, 2016, https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:4563/10.1093/ref:odnb/22123.
[53] Williams, *Literary Culture*, 141.

> Thee, CHURCHILL, to direct in nice Extreams
> Her banner'd Legions. (p.2)

Philips' poem eulogizes Anne not only as the figure responsible for Marlborough's victory but for a concurrent naval battle: Admiral Rooke's engagement against the French in August 1704.[54] The Tories favoured a 'blue-water' naval policy over Marlborough's and the Whigs' extensive land campaign; Rooke's fortuitously timed skirmish with the French fleet off Malaga just eleven days before Blenheim enabled the Tories to claim this naval battle as a victory equal to Marlborough's. Thus Philips is careful to include Rooke's naval engagement in Gibraltar, and his address to the Queen adopts the Tory line of equating the two campaigns, Marlborough's and Rooke's, thereby relegating and drawing attention away from the Duke's victory at Blenheim:

> Thou bid'st Thy CHURCHILL go,
> Succour the Injur'd Realms, Defeat the Hopes
> Of Haughty LOUIS, unconfin'd; he goes
> Obsequious, and the dread Command fulfils,
> In One Great Day. Again Thou giv'st in Charge
> To ROOK, that he should let his Monarch know,
> […] behold! With winged Speed He rides
> Undaunted o'er the lab'ring Main, t'assert
> Thy liquid Kingdoms; at his Approach
> The *Gallic* Navies, impotent to bear
> His Volly'd Thunder. (p.19)

The two panegyrics also portray differing extents of martial violence. As did the bellicose Whig verse of William's reign, Addison's poem incorporates disturbing scenes of graphic violence, for example, the 'bloody whirl-pools' (325) of the Danube into which the hapless French cavalry was driven: 'Thousands of fiery Steeds with wounds transfix'd/ Floating in gore, with their drown'd masters mixt' (322-3). Nevertheless, the descriptive details of bloodshed and brutality are relatively restrained, and Marlborough himself is rarely seen partaking in the physical violence. As is well known, Marlborough is depicted as a 'Calm and serene' (295) controller of the battle, distant and almost detached from the horrors of warfare. The famous sublime image of the Duke as an

[54] George Rooke, vice-Admiral of England during Anne's reign was a political follower of Lord Nottingham, Anne's Tory Secretary of State. See John B. Hattendorf, 'Rooke, Sir George (*c.*1650–1709),' in *ODNB* (Oxford University Press, 2004), accessed October 15, 2016, https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:4563/10.1093/ref:odnb/24059.

instrument of divine vengeance – 'an Angel by divine command' (292) – generates in the reader a sense of awe and wonder, whilst at the same time enables the Duke to rise otherworldly above the bloody details of the carnage.[55] Andreas Mueller convincingly argues that this famous example of the heroic sublime is linked to emergent impulses of Whiggish 'politeness', which produce ease, harmony and an unproblematic depiction of Marlborough's victory.[56] As Mueller explains: 'Addison carefully controls the presence of violence in *The Campaign* through the figure of a divinely inspired, aloof Marlborough. Thus made palatable, human injury and trauma are merely the necessary and […] relatively distant cost of battle'.[57] In my reading of Centlivre's drama, I argue that 'politeness' privileges benevolence and social harmony in an emergent Whig code of commercial virtues. In *The Campaign,* published in the same year that Centlivre's gaming plays were produced, Addison's effective use of the sublime mode enables a 'polite' resolution to the competing demands of heroic verse: to dramatize the glorious, awe-inspiring feats of battle, whilst maintaining a decorous and restrained distance from the brutal realities of war. The sublime biblical image of Marlborough as an angel of God emphasizes the Christian elements of the poem, as well as the divinely approved and thus 'virtuous' nature of Marlborough's martial deeds.

By contrast, Philips' *Blenheim* shows little restraint in depicting the horrors of combat.[58] Philips dramatizes grisly details of 'mangled Limbs' (p.8), 'Brains and Gore' (p.8), and deadly cannons that 'Behead whole Troops at once; the hairy Scalps/ Are whirl'd aloof, while numerous Trunks bestrow' (p.7). As opposed to the calm and efficient divine messenger of *The Campaign,* Philips' Marlborough is repeatedly shown in a frenzy of heroic violence, bathing 'His reeking Sword' (p.10) in '*Gallic* Blood' (p.10), and 'strow[ing] the Ground/ With headless Ranks' (p.10). The Duke's valiant action in reinforcing his 'yielding' (p.10) soldiers is compared to the heroism of Ajax, one of the champions of Homer's *The Illiad*: 'so *Ajax* interpos'd/ His Sevenfold Shield, and skreen'd *Laertes's* Son' (p.10).

[55] See Andreas K.E. Mueller, 'Politics, Politeness, and Panegyrics: Defoe, Addison, and Philips on Blenheim,' *Philological Quarterly* 94, no. 1/2 (2015): 127.
[56] Mueller, 'Politeness,' 127. Fairer similarly argues that Addison's poem employs the 'tactics, imagery and vocabulary of politeness'; David Fairer, *English Poetry of the Eighteenth Century 1700-1789* (London: Longman, 2003), 28.
[57] Mueller, 'Politeness,' 127.
[58] Ibid., 128-9.

Philips draws upon the classical epic in episodes of *aresteia* (the superhuman feats of epic heroes) that dramatize Marlborough's heroic valour, as when the Duke rides off on a 'furious Course' (p.9) to confront Tallard's forces, reminiscent of the vengeance and fury of Homer's Achilles:

> […] With speed
> Precipitant He rode, urging his Way
> O'er Hills of gasping Heroes, and fall'n Steeds
> Rowling in Death: Destruction, grim in Blood,
> Attends His furious Course. (p.9)

Addison, in contrast, not only eschews such detailed depictions of martial brutality but displays a Whiggish distancing from the use of classical motifs. The important closing stanza of *The Campaign* articulates the dominant Whig drive to reform British literary culture; the speaker explicitly dismisses the classical poetic devices – pagan gods and personifications of 'Cities and Countries' (472) – beloved of Stuart panegyrics and court masques, to assert that Marlborough's achievements are best expressed 'in their own native light':

> When actions, unadorn'd, are faint and weak,
> Cities and Countries must be taught to speak;
> Gods may descend in factions from the skies,
> And Rivers from their oozy Beds arise […]
> MARLBRO'S exploits appear divinely bright,
> And proudly shine in their own native light;
> Rais'd of themselves their genuine charms they boast,
> And those who paint 'em truest praise 'em most. (471-80)

The clearly differing emphases in the two panegyrics can be traced to the different cultural and political impetus underpinning them. Addison's and Philips' poems represent two opposing politicized literary aesthetics: whilst the Tory Philips draws upon a classical literary inheritance strongly associated with Toryism and Jacobitism, Addison displays a Whiggish imperative to establish a new, patriotic poetic tradition in which the great events of his time are depicted 'in their own native light'. Addison's efforts to limit overly graphic details of violence are in line with nascent Whiggish impulses towards politeness, ease and harmony, and his distancing from classical templates of heroic warfare asserts a new native literary culture free from the classical bondage of the past.

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As we have seen, Trotter was familiar with and admired Addison's *The Campaign*, and there are several similarities and echoes between Trotter's and Addison's tributes to Marlborough. Both Addison's poem and Trotter's 1706 panegyric are in pentameter couplets, a form which is 'heroic when required, but flexible enough to accommodate mundane matters without bathos'.[59] Addison's elevation of Marlborough's achievements to 'an Illiad rising out of One Campaign' (17) is echoed by Trotter's praise for Marlborough in her 1706 panegyric: 'he contracted into One Campaign/ A Hero's Life, a long successful Reign'.[60] Addison's 'Calm and serene' (295) military leader is mirrored in Trotter's depiction of the Duke as 'sedate' (p.162) and 'Compos'd' (p.162). Most significantly, Addison's and Trotter's panegyrics share a number of Whiggish features and emphases.

Both Trotter's tributes to Marlborough place a characteristically Whiggish priority on the Duke. The 1705 poem begins with a version of *The Aeneid*'s opening lines: 'Assist me Sacred Muse, the Man I sing,/ Who does to *Brittain* Fame, to *Europe* safety bring'.[61] Marlborough is the Aeneas of Trotter's heroic poem, the central hero and subject of her work. But while Virgil's great epic on the founding of Rome opens with 'Of Arms and the man I sing', Trotter's pointed exclusion of the word 'arms' is suggestive of the focus of her poem, which is not military battle, the staple of heroic epic, but the man himself, the great Duke. Trotter's 1706 poem celebrating the battle of Ramillies shows a similar emphasis on Marlborough at the expense of the figure who presided over the war, Queen Anne; only five lines in the poem touch upon the Queen and almost of all the remaining eight stanzas are dedicated to praising Marlborough and this 'Hero's character, so truly great' (p.162). Like the earlier tribute, the Ramillies poem gestures to *The Aeneid*, in its celebration of a hero whose remarkable feats demand a poet equal to Virgil: 'Shou'd none below a Virgil, sing his Name,/ The coming Age wou'd give him doubtful Fame' (p.161).

The poems' Virgilian allusions gesture to a classical heritage; however, Trotter also shows a

[59] Baird, 'Whig and Tory,' 172.
[60] Catharine Trotter, *On his Grace the Duke of Marlborough, after his victory at Ramellies, in 1706* in Smith, Suzuki and Wiseman, *Political Writings,* 4:162. Subsequent references are to this edition.
[61] Catharine Trotter, *A Poem on His Grace the Duke of Marlborough's return from his German Expedition* in Smith, Suzuki and Wiseman, *Political Writings*, 4:158. Subsequent references are to this edition.

Whiggish imperative to rework classical themes and motifs, an impulse we have observed in the works of Montagu, Egerton and other Whig writers. In Trotter's Blenheim poem, Marlborough's feats are depicted as exceeding those of classical heroes of antiquity:

> Let their Proud Chronicles, with [Marlborough's] compare
> *Caesar's* and *Alexander's* Fame in War;
> Sing thou his Nobler Cause, the end alone
> Makes Conquest Great, and both are here out-done. (1705, p.158)

Trotter displays what Williams has described as a 'dualism' in Whig poetry, 'within which classical and earlier native literature are a source of authority, yet also an authority to be rendered redundant by the events of modern life'.[62] Trotter's epic comparison with Caesar and Alexander establishes a frame of reference for the Duke's achievements; yet she also underscores that Marlborough's exploits are on so remarkable a scale that they overshadow the record of classical heroes. Similarly in the 1706 poem, Marlborough's heroism exceeds the virtues of all Virgil's heroes combined:

> Had [Virgil] our *Marlb'rough* drawn, he must with art
> Have veil'd some bright some unexampled part,
> Not have describ'd in one excelling mind
> The virtues of his varying Heroes join'd. (1706, p.161)

Unlike her male contemporaries, however, Trotter shows a feminine aversion to depicting the graphic horrors of war. Both Addison and Philips provide disturbing images of violence on the battlefield, although Addison's 'polite' panegyric carefully controls the level of violence depicted, in contrast to Philips' unrelenting portrayal of carnage and bloodletting. In the previous chapter, I explored the different ways in which women writers negotiate problematic male tropes of martial violence: Egerton configures William's military power into a sublime, elemental force of nature thus eschewing the need for graphic details of warfare, whilst Elizabeth Singer Rowe uses biblical metaphors to portray the King as a martial God of The Old Testament. Trotter displays a similar feminine distaste for violence in her panegyrics to Marlborough, which exclude accounts of the 'dreadful Field' (p.158) of battle altogether. Trotter explicitly declares and explains her intention:

[62] Williams, *Literary Culture*, 8.

> And yet forbear, strain not thy softer Voice
> To Martial Notes, a fitter Theme's my choice;
> Ill wou'd it suit a Female Hand to wield
> The War-like Weapons of the dreadful Field. (1705, p.158)

The 'fitter Theme' of Trotter's poem is not Marlborough's martial exploits on the battlefield, but the virtues and merits of the hero himself. Again invoking an epic comparison, in this case with the strife brought about by classical warfare – 'Civil-Broils' (p.158) and 'unprovok'd Destruction' (p.158) – Marlborough is depicted as serving a much nobler purpose:

> Far from Pursuits like theirs Great *Marlb'rough's* Aim,
> No thirst of Pow'r, or vain desire of Fame,
> With *Caesar*'s Conduct, as the *Grecian* Brave,
> In just Defence, He but destroys to save;
> His Toils are all for others Good alone,
> And e'en His Lawrels for another won.
> Thy Glories Gen'rous Heroe, least are thine,
> By them shall ANNA's Annals brighter shine. (1705, pp.158-9)

Trotter catalogues Marlborough's long list of virtues, deftly employing epic comparisons to bring out and privilege the Duke's heroic qualities. Unlike the classical figures of Caesar and Alexander, Marlborough eschews personal aggrandizement and the pursuit of power and fame. He fights for a righteous cause, and employs his military might for others' salvation: 'In just Defence, He but destroys to save'. Marlborough is generous and altruistic, labouring only for the good of others; the hard-won laurels of his victories used to magnify the glory of his monarch's reign. The 1706 poem is equally effusive on the merits of the Duke, and uses similar classical comparisons to privilege his superior virtues. Here, Marlborough is explicitly compared to the Trojan hero Aeneas to whom he is infinitely superior. In contrast to the Aeneas of Virgil's epic who wounds and kills his enemy, Turnus, in an 'intemp'rate' (p.162) fit of vengeance, Marlborough is merciful to his foes and compassionate to the wounded. A formidable military general, 'On Conquest bent' (p.162), he is, nevertheless, a peace-loving leader:

> Unlike *Aeneas*, *Marlb'rough* still the same
> Pursues not Vengeance with intemp'rate Flame,
> Righting the Injur'd, bounds his juster Aim;
> On Conquest bent, yet pleas'd the Foe to spare,
> Then most desiring Peace, when dreaded most in War. (1706, p.162)

In the 1706 poem, we witness a Marlborough who is intensely concerned about the wellbeing of his soldiers, and grieves the sad fate of his 'valu'd Servant' (p.162) – historically a Colonel Bingfield, Marlborough's Gentleman of the Horse, who was killed while helping the Duke remount during the battle of Ramilies:

> Resenting tenderly each Soldier's Fate,
> Yet in the direst chance of War, sedate;
> Whilst griev'd a valu'd Servant, at his Feet
> A stroke the Foe for him design'd, shou'd meet. (1706, p.162)

Trotter's depiction of Marlborough, which eschews martial violence and focuses almost exclusively on the general's humane qualities of compassion, generosity and mercy, reworks and transforms Whiggish conceptions of the hero of the previous reign. The bloodthirsty Whig panegyrics of the 1690s project a heroic model in which physical courage and martial skills are imperative. Williams has argued that Whiggish constructions of Marlborough mimic the template of William, the warrior-king, and that the Duke's achievements are celebrated in the same Whig rhetoric of liberty, martyrdom and deliverance.[63] Whilst it is true that many of the Williamite values and emphases remain constant in Whig panegyrics of Anne's reign, there is also a clear shift in literary representations of the military hero of the period. Trotter may be almost unique in eschewing depictions of martial exploits altogether; nevertheless her privileging of 'virtue' and humane qualities is part of a general evolution of Whig notions of heroism. We witness in Addison's *The Campaign*, the intertwining of Marlborough's valour with his humane attributes: his 'Unbounded courage and compassion join'd' (224). In a famous passage where the ordinary soldier is seen executing the order to scorch the earth 'With sword and fire' (233), the Duke is portrayed as moved by grief and sympathy:

> A thousand villages to ashes turns,
> In crackling flames a thousand harvests burns, […]
> The list'ning soldier fixt in sorrow stands,
> Loth to obey his leader's just commands;
> The leader grieves, by gen'rous pity sway'd,
> To see his just commands so well obey'd. (234-43)

[63] Williams, *Literary Culture*, 140.

Against the horrific background of burning villages and the 'cries of infants' (239), Addison is careful to underscore the justice of the Duke's military orders, in the repetition of Marlborough's 'just commands'. Earlier in the stanza, we are told that the general did his utmost to avoid the deadly manoeuvre but was left with no alternative due to the obduracy of the enemy: 'Long did he strive th' obdurate foe to gain/ By proffer'd grace, but long he strove in vain' (228-9). Addison's Marlborough is a soldier who fights because he has no choice; he grieves for the human losses of the war and takes no pleasure nor glory in its brutal outcome. He is a compassionate leader who aids and inspires his troops: 'To fainting squadrons sent the timely aid,/ Inspir'd repuls'd battalions to engage,' (289-90). Trotter emphasizes similarly pacific and virtuous traits in her depiction of Marlborough. She underscores the moral obligation of a warrior: to fight only for a just cause, not in the pursuit of power or glory, to eschew vengeance and intemperance and show mercy to the enemy and compassion to the injured.

Trotter's and Addison's emphases on the Duke's humane qualities signal the emergence of a new model of heroism centring on the figure of the virtuous soldier. Trotter's depiction of Marlborough projects the virtues of an ideal warrior, which parallel those celebrated in *The Revolution of Sweden*, in which Gustavus, the model patriot-king, embodies the qualities of martial valour, moderation, mercy and generosity. As discussed in the chapter of Trotter's drama, the publication of Steele's *The Christian Hero* and the production of Rowe's *Tamerlane* marked an evolution in literary representations of the hero from 1701 onwards that emphasized military leaders who are highly virtuous men, as well as courageous warriors. In the prologue to *Tamerlane* composed by the Whiggish Samuel Garth, Tamerlane is praised as a saviour: 'His sword destroys less than mercy saves' – terms which are later echoed by Trotter in her 1705 tribute to Marlborough: 'In just Defence, He but destroys to save' (p.159).[64]

These impulses are apparent in other contemporary Whig poetry. In the preface to his 1704 panegyric to Marlborough, John Oldmixon compares the benevolent and virtuous heroism of the Duke with the selfish heroism of other conquerors, 'ancient and modern [who] were animated by a

[64] Samuel Garth, 'Sir Samuel Garth's prologue for *Tamerlane*,' in Rowe, *Plays*, 324.

lawless Ambition and an immoderate Desire of Rule'.[65] Oldmixon's poem glorifies Marlborough's feats at Blenheim while underscoring the mercy and generosity that the general shows to the defeated enemy: 'No sooner had they Vanquish'd than they spar'd./ CHURCHILL at once Ten Thousand *Gauls* forgives,/ And *Tallard* only by his Mercy lives'.[66] Richard Blackmore's *Advice to the Poets* lauds Marlborough and his soldiers as 'Angelic Warriors', and praises the Duke for his 'pious Soul' and 'his gen'rous Heart'.[67] An anonymous and clearly Whiggish tribute to Sarah Churchill praises her husband, the Duke, for his virtuous qualities, including mildness, restraint and mercy:

> The Heroe, who, in Blood takes no delight,
> In Victory as Mild, as Fierce in fight,
> Pities the Brave, howe're unfortunate,
> Restrains his Fury, and Suspends his Fate.[68]

In this light, Trotter's construction of a pacific Marlborough, detached from those bloodthirsty exploits and ambitions associated with the heroic warrior, conforms to changing conceptions of the Whig hero and the emphasis on virtue apparent in her drama. Furthermore, Trotter's privileging of Marlborough's humane and Christian virtues to the complete exclusion of any connotations of martial violence, signals her distinctively feminised configuration of the notion of heroism. Barash's interpretation of a 'pacific Marlborough governed by the mind of Anne' clearly ignores the literary and cultural impulses and personal sympathies that underpin Trotter's panegyrics.[69] Trotter's pacific, generous, merciful and compassionate Marlborough embodies all the virtues of a Christian Whig hero. Indeed, far from serving as a mere vehicle for the female 'Monarch's Mind', the Marlborough of Trotter's 1705 poem is depicted in quasi-royal and almost divine terms, usually reserved in panegyric tradition to exalt monarchical authority.[70] Trotter's Marlborough emerges as both 'royal' and a Christian hero, combining a majestic presence with a gentle demeanour: 'With awful Majesty, and sweetness join'd' (p.159). Reminiscent of the terms used to praise William in Whiggish panegyrics, Trotter suggests that the Duke was divinely appointed, 'form'd' in heaven, and that his

[65] John Oldmixon, preface to *A pastoral poem on the victories at Schellenburgh and Blenheim* (London, 1704).
[66] Oldmixon, *pastoral poem*, 26.
[67] Richard Blackmore, *Advice to the Poets* [etc] (London, 1706), 16. Subsequent citations are to this edition.
[68] *A Poem to Her Grace the Duchess of Marlborough* [etc] (London, 1704), 6.
[69] Barash, *Women's Poetry*, 255.
[70] Ibid.

actions have divine sanction – 'his Great/ Work approv'd':

> A graceful pleasing Frame was next design'd
> With awful Majesty, and sweetness join'd,
> Shou'd bear the Image of this temper'd Mind;
> Serenely Great, to be Rever'd and Lov'd;
> Thus Heav'n our *Marlb'rough* form'd, and his Great
> Work approv'd. (1705, p.159)

This elevation of Marlborough to divine-royal status is apparent in other Whig verse, which appropriates the royalist idiom of divine right to pay tribute to the Duke, in order to underscore the righteous and seemingly providential nature of his military endeavours. Addison's *The Campaign* describes the general as 'Our god-like leader' (68) whose 'exploits appear divinely bright' (477). Marlborough comes closest to divinity in the celebrated image of the Duke as 'an Angel by divine command' (292) who executes God's sentence on a 'guilty land' (293). In Addison's description of Marlborough and his military ally, Eugene of Savoy, both heroes are surrounded by a blaze of divine light: 'A sudden friendship, while with stretch'd out rays/ They meet each other, mingling blaze with blaze.' (108-9). This blinding light of divinity recalls royal panegyrics, both Whig and Tory; for example, Thomas D'Urfey's poetic tribute to William on the King's safe return: 'To Light the Great, the happy Monarch home;/ And dress'd in Blazes of new dazzling Light'.[71] Trotter's panegyric similarly co-opts motifs from the royalist rhetoric of monarchical divinity to exalt Marlborough; however, her rendering of the Duke's divine nature appears far less effusive than that of Addison, and her addition of the quality of 'sweetness' emphasizes the gentle and humane side of her hero – attributes which are also underscored in her heroic drama.

Trotter's Whiggish panegyrics pointedly exclude a similarly 'divine' rendering of the Queen. But her 1705 poem does draw upon and adapt royalist traditions, namely seventeenth-century royalist topographical verse, to dramatize the Queen and her authority:

> Content within Her Banks, as Peaceful *Thames*,
> She lifts to their just heights her gentle Streams;
> Yet spreads her Bounteous Arms, like Friendly *Nile*,
> When wanted to relieve a Neighb'ring Soil:
> Whilst *Lewis*, like a Torrent, breaks his Bounds,
> Overwhelming all in Ruin that surrounds. (1705, p.159)

[71] Thomas D'Urfey, *Albion's blessing* [etc] (London, 1698), 3.

Gesturing to John Denham's *Cooper's Hill* (1642), in which the Thames contained within its banks symbolizes monarchical stability and restraint, Trotter first evokes the Queen in the image of the 'Peaceful *Thames'* and her 'gentle Streams'; the emphasis here is on a royal sovereignty which is 'gentle', mild, equable. 'Content within Her Banks' – Anne is hailed as a monarch who rules within the 'just' boundaries proscribed – a Whiggish reworking of a royalist trope that gestures, implicitly, to the Queen's role as a constitutional sovereign. By contrast, the French king, the absolute monarch, is depicted as a tyrannical force, 'a Torrent, [that] breaks his Bounds', through his territorial ambitions on the Continent which bring destruction in his wake. Trotter also anticipates the river motif in Alexander Pope's *Windsor-Forest* (1713), a Tory paean to peace precipitated by the Treaty of Utrecht of 1713. As is well known, Pope's image of the 'Unbounded *Thames*' flowing into the sea signifies the rich bounty of trade and imperialism which peace is prophesied to bring.[72] In Trotter's poem, published at the height of military action, eight years before peace was concluded, Anne is configured as the 'Friendly *Nile*' who spreads her 'Bounteous' tributaries. The river Nile, of course, is known for its constant, cyclical flooding which irrigates and fertilizes its 'Neighb'ring Soil'. Trotter's imaging of the Queen as the 'Bounteous' Nile – a symbol of sustenance, bounty and beneficence – signals the familiar Whig narrative of England's role as the saviour of Protestant Europe who generously aids her Continental allies.

Trotter's panegyrics to Marlborough display a number of distinctively Whiggish themes and emphases. Trotter celebrates Marlborough's military glories and affirms the righteousness of his cause, whilst using heroic poetry as a mode of moral instruction to promote the ideal virtues of a military leader at a time of war. This emphasis on virtue rather than martial valour parallels the trend in Whiggish literature of Anne's reign to modify the 'Battle Hymns of the Junto Whigs' of William's era into a less jingoistic tune.[73] Trotter's feminine verse, however, eschews martial violence altogether, depicting a Marlborough who is shorn of almost all connotations of physical violence and martial action to foreground only his virtues and humane qualities. In her ongoing privileging of

[72] Alexander Pope, *Windsor-Forest* in *Pastoral Poetry and An Essay on Criticism*, eds. E. Audra and Aubrey Williams, vol. 1 of *The Twickenham Edition*, 191. Subsequent references to the poem appear parenthetically in the text by line number.
[73] Womersley, *Augustan*, xxiii.

virtue, Trotter's role as a war poet occupies the same authorial space carved out in her profession as a dramatist, as a leading female advocate of morality and virtue.

### 5b 'The Feminine Sublime': Sarah Fyge Egerton's manuscript verse address to Marlborough

Egerton's panegyric to Marlborough, 'The Essay Address'd to the Illustrious prince and Duke of Marlboro after the long Campaigne 1708' (hereinafter 'Essay'), signals her ambition to participate in a patriotic, militant poetic mode. Her striking intervention in the Whig mode of the heroic sublime reveals much about the notions of gender and poetic inspiration, and her complex negotiations of a dominant tradition of a masculinist Whig poetics.

Very little is known about Egerton's last known work, which never reached publication and is not available in a modern edition. The poem is excluded from Robert D. Horn's otherwise exhaustive listing of panegyrics to Marlborough, and has received scant critical attention.[74] We have no tangible evidence as to why the poem was not published. Jeslyn Medoff has drawn attention to the lack of commercial success of Egerton's 1703 volume, which could explain why she did not seek further publication of her work.[75] As we shall see, however, some of the themes addressed by the poem are also suggestive of why it was never published.

Similarly, we can only speculate on the reasons why Egerton sought to pay tribute to the Duke in 1708, a year that marked 'the third, and final, wave of panegyrics', after the initial outpouring of adulatory verse following the general's triumphs in Blenheim (1704) and Ramilies (1705).[76] 1708 was the year of Marlborough's great victory at Oudernarde, celebrated by Egerton in her poem. But as Horn explains, notable panegyrics of that year were confined to those by 'Gildon, Tate, and Eusden, with the remainder of anonymous and inferior nature'; as he points out '[t]he victory was

[74] In the only critical commentary on Egerton's panegyric, Barash quotes two lines from the poem to highlight Egerton's lauding of Anne's 'brighter Reign', prophesied to eclipse that of Elizabeth I; Barash, *Women's Poetry*, 231. Yet as my reading demonstrates, 'Essay' is almost entirely engaged with Marlborough's heroism and Egerton's artistic response to the Whig sublime.
[75] Medoff, 'Daring Pen,' 158.
[76] Horn, *Marlborough*, 260.

splendidly achieved, but the political tide was turning'.[77] By then, Marlborough was increasingly under siege domestically, attacked by Tories, and engaged in a power struggle with the Tory Secretary of State, Robert Harley. The Duke's relations with the Queen were also increasingly strained, and Anne, who had found a new female confidant in the Tory Abigail Masham, was now openly estranged from the Duchess, Sarah Churchill.[78] The year 1708 was also when the Whigs triumphed in parliamentary elections, and the quintet of Whig Junto lords were returned as ministers for the first time since William's reign; concurrently, an aborted French-Jacobite raid off the coast of Scotland in March 1708 stoked fears of further Jacobite threats.[79] Egerton was known to be living in Adstock, Buckinghamshire at the time, with her last published work behind her in 1706**.** It may be that the Whig electoral success and the fanning of anti-Jacobite fervour moved her partisan inclinations, compelling her to commemorate the Whig hero, Marlborough, who was increasingly under political attack. In the year after Egerton's tribute to Marlborough was composed, Delarivier Manley, Egerton's now bitter enemy, published an effusive address (also entitled an 'Essay') to Major-General Webb, a Tory-affiliated soldier of the continental war.[80] Having scored a remarkable victory over French troops whilst defending supply lines to Lisle, Webb was perceived to be sidelined by Marlborough without receiving his due honours, and consequently became the focus of Tory agitation against the Duke, who was accused of being a monopolizer of glory.[81] Manley's poem appears to have been in dialogue with Egerton's panegyric; the former dismisses Marlborough's military triumph at Oudernarde celebrated by Egerton, as 'no Victory' without the success at Lisle, which Webb had helped secure.[82] Thus although we have no information on the circulation of Egerton's manuscript poem, it seems probable that Manley had gained access to Egerton's work; we can also surmise that Egerton's tribute was an attempt to enter the on-going political dialogue at a time of intense partisan struggles, in both political and literary circles.

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[77] Ibid.
[78] See Somerset, *Queen Anne*, 340-2.
[79] Ibid., 343-6.
[80] Delarivier Manley, *An Heroick Essay Upon The Unequal'd Victory Obtain'd By Major-General Webb Over the Count De La Motte At Wynendale* (London, 1709).
[81] See Trevelyan, *England,* 2:371-2.
[82] Manley, *Essay*, 6.

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Egerton's panegyric to Marlborough embodies her critical exploration of the central Whig poetic mode of the heroic sublime. Imbued with Egerton's familiar feminist energies and preoccupation with female artistic inspiration, the poem is a witty, original, feminine 'take' on this militant, masculinist genre. Egerton deftly manipulates the Whig tropes of political and aesthetic liberty embodied by the sublime to claim artistic freedom as a woman writer in an androcentric culture.

The Whig appropriation of the sublime was intrinsically linked to the Whig primacy of political liberty and their radical cultural programme to reform Britain's native literary tradition.[83] Whilst writers of the Civil War era were drawn to the transgressive qualities of the sublime as a mode of articulating radical political ideology,[84] contemporary Whig poets promoted the development of the sublime as the stylistic embodiment of modern political liberty.[85] In its emphases on heightened poetic expression and transcendent genius and its rejection of formal harmonies, the sublime offers liberation from the constraints of neoclassical formalism associated with Royalist and Stuart verse.[86] The Whig sublime embodies the partisan reformist drive to assert the 'liberty' of poetry from the influence of a classical and Royalist past, and thus extend the revolution principles of 1688 into the sphere of poetry.[87] The link between liberty and sublimity is articulated by the Whig writer and physician, Richard Blackmore, in his call to 'assert the *Liberty* of *Poetry* and set up for an *Original* in *Writing*'.[88] Blackmore catalogues the desired features of this '*Original'* way of writing, illuminating the artistic demands of the Whig sublime: 'a *Sublime Stile*, elevated *Thoughts*, magnificent *Expressions* where the *Subject* requires them, and great richness and abundance throughout the whole, without

[83] For a discussion of the Whig sublime, see Williams, *Literary Culture*, 173-203.
[84] See David Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic: Poetry, Rhetoric and Politics, 1627-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 137-41; and Nigel Smith, *Literature and Revolution in England, 1640-1660* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1994), 125-6.
[85] The perceived link between liberty and sublimity is long-standing and can be traced to Longinus' classical treatise on the sublime, *Peri Hupsous*, whose reappearance was marked by translations by John Hall in 1652, Boileau in 1674, and Leonard Welsted in 1712. For the role of the Longinian tradition in the development of the eighteenth-century sublime, see Andrew Ashfield and Peter De Bolla, eds., *The Sublime: A Reader in British Eighteenth-Century Aesthetic Theory*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 18-21.
[86] Abigail Williams, 'Whig and Tory Poetics,' in Gerrard, *Eighteenth-Century Poetry*, 453.
[87] Womersley, *Augustan*, xxii.
[88] Blackmore, preface to *the Book of Job*.

the *Aids* of the *Pagan System* of *Divinity*'.[89]

The revival of the sublime was also importantly linked to the central Whig emphasis on martial heroism. With its elevated verse and heightened expression, the sublime was perceived by Whig poets as an infinitely suitable mode for depicting the outstanding military feats of their time, enabling them to generate a sense of awe and astonishment for the dazzling series of martial victories which were almost beyond comprehension. In his classical treatise on the sublime, *Peri Hupsous*, whose seventeenth-century translations were crucial for the revival of the genre, Longinus explains the elevating, transporting power of the sublime, which lies beyond logical argument and persuasion: 'the *Sublime* does not persuade, but create[s] Transport, always and every where superior to the *Persuasive* […] the *Sublime* comes upon the hearer with irresistible Strength and Force, and elevates him above himself'.[90] John Dennis further elaborates in his critique of Longinus' writings: 'the sublime does not so properly persuade us, as it ravishes and transport us, and produces in us a certain Admiration, mingled with Astonishment and with Surprize […] whenever it breaks out where it ought to do, like the artillery of *Jove*, it thunders, blazes, and strikes at once'.[91] In his comparison of the sublime with a powerful natural phenomenon, Dennis highlights the sentiments of terror as well as awe evoked by the sublime. As we have seen, Addison's complex, sublime figuration of Marlborough as an angel riding the whirl-wind alludes to a vision of the apocalypse while generating a sense of awe and wonder in the reader; yet the impulse of 'politeness' also produces, paradoxically, a polite distancing from disturbing scenes of martial violence.

In her discussion of the Whig sublime, Abigail Williams makes a useful distinction between the religious and secular sublime.[92] The former is promoted in the important critical works of John Dennis who assimilates Longinus' classical sublime to the needs of a modern, Christian society by

[89] Ibid.
[90] Longinus, 'A Translation of Longinus's Treatise on the Sublime,' in *Epistles, Odes, &c* [etc] by Leonard Welsted (London, 1724), 143.
[91] John Dennis, *The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry* (1704) in *Works*, 1:359.
[92] Williams, *Literary Culture*, 181-92.

replicating the sublimity of the Bible in modern poetry.[93] Yet features of both the divine and secular sublime often appeared in the same work, as in Elizabeth Singer Rowe's 'A Pindarick Poem on Habbakuk' (1696), which evokes William's martial heroism in the sublime image of an angry God of the Old Testament: 'His *Glory* soon *Eclips'd* the once bright *Titan's Rays*,/ And fill'd the trembling *Earth* with *Terror* and *Amaze*'.[94] My focus, however, is on the secular or heroic sublime embodied by Whig panegyrics on affairs of the state, such as Charles Montagu's *Epistle to Dorset* (1690), Joseph Addison's *The Campaign* and Richard Blackmore's *Advice to the Poets* (1706), which draw upon the sublime mode to evoke a sense of overwhelming sensation and lofty elevation that parallels the awe-inspiring military feats of the 1690s and 1700s. As Williams asserts, the most celebrated Whig poetry comprised 'elevated public poems on contemporary political events, which were praised for the fire and genius of their rapturous poetic excursions: the sublime affects of the verse'.[95]

Egerton's 'Essay' is a meditation on and interrogation of her poetic identity and practice in relation to the heroic sublime. Useful comparisons can be made with Richard Blackmore's *Advice to the Poets* (1706) (hereinafter *Advice*), an important document of Whig poetics concerned with both commemorating Marlborough's victories, as well as providing poetic advice to aspiring practitioners. Through their invocations to the Muse, both poems reveal a common concern to link poetic inspiration with contemporary events of national importance, and render the heroic actions on the battlefield with adequate poetic ardour. Blackmore's *Advice* begins on a note of anxiety on the ability of his 'unequal' Muse to do justice to the theme of '*Blenheim*'s glorious Toil' (p.4):

> Oh! let the Conqueror stop his swift Career,
> A while the Foe, a while the Poet spare**.**
> […] His Conquests are so sudden, so compleat,
> He does so oft his Miracles repeat,
> The Muse exhausted pants, and hangs the Wing,
> Has no more Strength to rise, and no more Breath to sing. (p.3)

Blackmore's 'exhausted' Muse is defeated by the torrid pace of Marlborough's successive victories;

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[93] See John Dennis' *The Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry* (1701) and *The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry* (1704). For Dennis' critiques of the sublime, see David B. Morris, *The Religious Sublime: Christian Poetry and Critical Tradition in Eighteenth-Century England* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1972), 47-78.
[94] Rowe, *Poems,* 18.
[95] Williams, *Literary Culture*, 175.

he 'Conquers faster, than our Bards can Write' (p.3). Emphasizing the immense scale of the Duke's heroic feats, Blackmore compares the defeat of Marlborough's '*Gallic*' foes with the failure of British poets to adequately capture Blenheim's glorious triumphs:

> The *British* Poets labour'd to display
> The Martial Toil of *Blenheim*'s wond'rous Day,
> […] For *Blenheim* was a Theme too bright, too strong
> For any Rapture, any master Song.
> In this Attempt, they did their Stock exhaust,
> They spent their genius, and their Vigor [*sic*] lost. (p.5)

Blackmore's emphasis on the immense magnitude of the subject matter, 'a Theme too bright, too strong', which lies beyond the poet's artistic and linguistic ability, is a distinct characteristic of sublime verse, and the struggle towards transcendent poetic flight is part of the poetic process.[96] He is as concerned with the act of poetic composition as he is with the subject matter being praised, an interest exhibited from a distinctly gendered perspective in Egerton's 'Essay'.

Egerton's poem displays a similar anxiety about the adequacy of her verse to match the 'Grandure' (p.1) of heroic themes. The first stanza wittily depicts her attempts to seek alternative sources of poetic inspiration, appropriating and manipulating the classical models of Apollo and the Muses. Recalling her eager homage to the Queen in her panegyric to Anne, Egerton again describes herself as a poet 'Eager to press amongst the tunefull throng' (p.1) – to number amongst those paying tribute to the great military hero:

> I calld the Great Apollo to my aid,
> Implord the help of each inspiring Maid,
> Eager to press amongst the tunefull throng,
> Who all their Harps to Churchills praise had Strung,
> And offer up with them my gratefull Song.
> But Pean bid me breake my feeble Lyre,
> Said he would only his own Sex inspire,
> The world no more from me Should Heros [*sic*] know,
> And twas against his will I sang Nausau. (p.1)

The speaker first appeals to Apollo, leader of the Muses, for aid; but in an allusion to Apollo's notorious Salic Law of Wit, the invocation to Apollo or Paean is refused on account of her gender:

[96] See Williams, *Literary Culture*, 195.

'But Pean bid me breake my feeble Lyre,/ Said he would only his own Sex inspire'.[97] She then implores the help of other 'inspiring maid[s]', suggesting she is one of a group of women seeking to pay tribute to Marlborough, a reference perhaps to Catharine Trotter and her panegyrics to the Duke. Thus while Egerton's poetic authority is predicated on her theme of military glory, she is acutely aware of the androcentric bias of the motifs of martial heroism, which nevertheless proved attractive to her and other women writers. In a reference to William or 'Nausau', Egerton draws attention to her elegy to the King which incurs into the masculine, martial territory of Whig heroic verse: 'And twas against his will I sang Nausau'. Egerton makes the Whiggish association of Marlborough's triumphs with a continuation of William's military projects as evident in the pairing of the two heroes, and the realm of Britain '[w]hich he and Nausau fought So long to Save' (p.2).

Egerton's appeal for inspiration takes an interesting turn, and Apollo's stance contrasts sharply with the encouragement and support offered by the nine Muses:

> Th' officious Nymphs with pleasure heard my voice,
> Smileing applaud the Grandure of my choice,
> And all at once emitt their Sacred flame,
> But oh too fast, the inspiration came,
> No mortall Breast the affluence could bear,
> The energy of all the Nine exerting there,
> And what each Muse design'd her proudest boast,
> Was all in one bright blaze confus'dly lost. (p.1)

Isobel Grundy explains the complexity of women writers' identification with the Muse: while this female figure of artistic inspiration is often evoked by male poets in a customary female-to-male role as a nurturer or seductress, women poets negotiated this potentially problematic trope (in that classical and literary conventions gender the Muse as female and the poet male) in interesting ways, at times tapping the Muse as a supportive female source of self-authorization.[98] Egerton's rendering of the Muses, who '[s]mileing applaud the Grandure of [her] choice', creates a sense of female

[97] The literary myth of Apollo excludes women writers from the poetic tradition and constructs the poet as necessarily male; see Nancy Cotton, *Women Playwrights in England, c. 1363-1750* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1980), 180-93.

[98] Isobel Grundy, 'The Poet and Her Muse,' in *The Timeless and the Temporal: Writings in Honour of John Chalker by Friends and Colleagues,* ed. Elizabeth Maslen (London: University of London, 1993), 178. Grundy argues that the trope linking writer to Muse in which the male poet has an intimate or austere but always personal and erotic relation with his female Muse was problematic for the woman writer, signifying the exclusion of the female from language.

solidarity and support for her incursions into masculine poetic practice. Egerton's empowering image of the 'Nine' repeats the overriding theme of the feminocentric volume, *The Nine Muses,* which draws upon the classical trope of artistic inspiration to claim a superior and unassailable source of female literary authority.[99] Through occupying the site of the Muses (with Egerton in the roles of Erato, Euterpe and Terpsichore), the poets of *The Nine Muses* can be seen to employ an audacious rhetorical strategy of making themselves the source of poetic power.[100] Egerton's rendering of the Muses in 'Essay' can also be seen as a reworking of the feminist message in 'The Emulation' (1703), in which her call to women to attempt the sciences, philosophy and poetry is couched in the authority of the Muses:

> Come all ye Fair, the great Attempt improve,
> Divinely imitate the Realms above:
> There's ten celestial Females govern Wit,
> And but two Gods that dare pretend to it;
> And shall these finite Males reverse their Rules,
> No, we'll be Wits, and then Men must be Fools. (*Poems*, p.109)

Egerton sets the male authority of 'two Gods' (Apollo and Mercury) against the greater numbers of the 'ten' female Muses (the nine Muses and their mother, Mnemosyne, goddess of memory), urging her female compatriots to 'imitate the Realms above' – to draw upon the Muses' celestial authority to claim intellectual freedom and agency for themselves. In 'Essay', however, this trope is problematized by Egerton's treatment of the Muses' inspirational flame, and she deftly manipulates her earlier identification with the Muse to dramatize the poetic process of the sublime, echoing and reworking many of Blackmore's themes in *Advice*.

In a feminised version of the sublime, Egerton depicts the overpowering energy of the nine Muses' 'Sacred flame', which mimics Blackmore's rendering of Marlborough's heroic exploits as 'too bright, too strong/ For any Rapture, any master Song'. As we have seen, Blackmore's Muse is defeated by the swift victories of the Duke's successive campaigns: 'What Muse can follow with an equal Pace,/ Thro' the bright Stages of his rapid Race?' (p.3). In 'Essay', however, Egerton

[99] Kelley, 'Pox,' 12.
[100] Lilley, 'True state,' 75.

configures the Muses' poetic fire as pouring forth at an overwhelming rate: 'And all at once emitt their Sacred flame,/ But oh too fast, the inspiration came'. Blackmore uses images of blinding fire and light to dramatize Marlborough's heroic feats which overpower his 'defeated' Muse: 'For thee the Theme is too sublime and bright,/ Thou art not […] Eagle-Ey'd, to bear this Blaze, this Stress of light' (p.8). By contrast, Egerton builds up the overpowering energy of her Muses' poetic 'flame': 'No mortall Breast the affluence could bear,/ The energy of all the Nine exerting there […] all in one bright blaze confus'dly lost'. Egerton's and Blackmore's recurring references to 'flame' and 'blaze' draw upon 'the vocabulary of sublime effect', which utilizes stylistic motifs of fire, enthusiasm and rapture to express the heroic magnitude of the subject matter.[101] Egerton also engages with aspects of the sublime as embodying something that lies beyond human utterance and rational criticism, with connotations of an apocalyptic natural phenomenon. In her description of the Muses' flame as an incendiary explosion 'confus'dly lost', Marlborough's glorious exploits are built up as a vast, irresistible force of nature almost beyond comprehension, which renders the poet disorientated and confused, struggling to find an adequate language to express his admiration. In a striking intervention in the masculine mode of the heroic sublime, Egerton depicts powerful female figures emitting a blinding, combustible energy, thus giving dramatic expression and a feminine tenor to the perceived quality of the sublime as a confusion or incoherence which transcends logical argument and persuasion. In their very different dramatizations of the sublime poetic process, Blackmore and Egerton demonstrate the different meanings available to male and female poets in the heroic sublime and the poet's relation to his Muse. Blackmore depicts his Muse as unable to fulfil a nurturing or supportive role: defeated and unable to 'rise to such a height' as his hero's glorious feats. His solution is an androcentric confederation of 'Master Bards', who unite to 'drain' their Muses' poetic 'Treasures':

> Let many Master Bards their Force unite,
> And with Confederate Fire a Song Heroic Write.
> The Muses richest Treasures let 'em drain,
> Lavish their Genius, and exhaust their Vein. (p.11)

[101] See Williams, *Literary Culture*, 191.

Whilst the failures of Blackmore's and Egerton's Muse – the classical trope of artistic inspiration – can be seen as a characteristically Whiggish move to eschew classical machinery, there is a distinctively gendered difference in the two poets' approaches to the Muse. Blackmore displays a typically masculinist view of the female Muse as an object to be utilized, bankrupted, 'drain[ed]', and 'exhaust[ed]'; his references to raiding the muse's 'Treasures' and exhausting 'their Vein' reveal a sexual undertone to his relations to the Muse. By contrast Egerton evokes the female figures of artistic inspiration as a sisterhood, a supportive circle of female solidarity, from whom she can claim favour and protection (recalling the supportive female literary network of 'The Nine Muses' at the beginning of the century). Egerton creates an empowering vision of the feminine, embodied in the sublime, incendiary power of the Muses – her customary trope of female authority – which is more than a match for the masculine, heroic subject, but nevertheless threatens to overwhelm the poet, and herself. Egerton's solution is to assume the role of a solitary female combatant, which we witnessed in her tribute to Anne, and proceed on her poetic exploration without the help of 'Phoebus or the Fair':

> Without the aid of Phoebus or the Fair,
> Who should adorn the Pomp of Churchills warr;
>
> I will my selfe th' imbounded Theme persue,
> And Speake the glorious things I have in view. (p.1)

In Blackmore's *Advice*, the poetic imperative of Marlborough's glorious victories is answered by an all-male confederation of 'Master Bards', who unite to produce a multiplicity of praise and tribute to meet the vast scale of the hero's achievements. This is depicted as a resounding echo of triumph and fame: 'Triumph's multiplying Sound' (p.25). As Womersely observes of this verse paragraph, 'as the polyphony of praise builds, echo itself becomes the mode of Whig epic':[102]

> Good heav'ns! – but hark I hear an echoing Sound,
> It does from Sphere to Sphere, from World to World rebound.
> […] Hark! Now I hear the Shouts of Joy around,
> I hear the Triumph's multiplying Sound. (p.25)

Egerton's 'Essay' similarly engages with the same theme in her attempt to match Marlborough's

[102] Womersley, *Augustan*, xxvii.

'Ecchoing Fame and Glory':

> Thick in his Train their blushing banners bore,
> While Ecchoing Fame and Glory flew before.
>
> Oh coud I loud as She his Conquests Sound,
> My verse shoud fill the universall round. (p.3)

But in an admission of the weakness of her solitary feminine voice, she highlights her failure to equal the resounding triumphs that Marlborough's achievements demand: 'my Assiduous Numbers are too weak,/ Straind to that height the trembling strings must break' (p.3). In another twist to this poetic exploration, she turns to the two leading panegyrists of the continental war, 'Immortal Addison' and 'Sublime Phillips':

> Immortal Addison shall tune his Lyre,
> And Peans Selfe the Sonorous Lays inspire,
> To reach the Heros acts with equal Fire:
> While Sublime Phillips with majestick stile,
> Gives double honours to our Conquoring [*sic*] Isle:
> […] Again the tunefull Pair sing Marlbro's Fame;
> Raise everlasting Trophy's to his name. (p.3)

Joseph Addison and John Philips, as we have established, authored the two competing poetic tributes to Marlborough commemorating the Duke's triumphs at Blenheim. As did her compatriot, Catharine Trotter, Egerton reveals an acute consciousness of and familiarity with both these panegyrists in the field. She invokes Addison as the exemplary male Whig heroic poet, who with Apollo's support matches 'the Heros acts with equal Fire'. Addison is praised here for answering the demands of Whig martial verse whereby the heroic subject matter must be matched by equally heroic ardour on the part of the poet. Egerton's reference to 'Sublime Phillips with majestick stile', alludes to the post-Miltonic blank verse form of his poetic offering, sponsored by the Tory Robert Harley. In lauding the two leading practitioners of epic verse, Egerton positions herself as both a participant and literary critic of the dominant tradition. By strategically locating herself in relation to the 'tunefull Pair' of prominent male panegyrists, Egerton attempts to appropriate the authority of patriotic masculine poets and reinforce her tribute to Marlborough: to 'loud…his Conquest Sound' and assert her own legitimacy in the field.

Yet in a final dramatic turn in the poem, Egerton rejects the 'artful Strains' of the heroic sublime altogether to posit an original answer to 'Marlbro's Fame' (p.3):

> No, Cease Your artfull Strains they'r useless here,
> A worth like his most in it selfe appear's,
> […] Our Churchills gloryes cannot be expres't
> But fix an awfull Joy in ev'ry Breast,
> Which like Innate Idea's of the Soul,
> Will thro Succeeding Generations Rowle,
> They'l next their God the Hero still Adore
> When Numbers and Records shall be no more
>
> When Realms and People nowhere can be found
> Fame thro the Worlds above shall Marlbro' Sound. (p.3)

Egerton's critical interrogation of the sublime seems to have come full circle; throughout the poem she displays a deft negotiation and manipulation of the themes and tropes of Whig heroic verse to finally display the ultimate aesthetic liberty to contest and dismiss it altogether. The gloriously immortal nature of Marlborough's achievements eschews the need for '[s]onorous Lays' and heroic poetic ardour: 'When Realms and People nowhere can be found/ Fame thro the Worlds above shall Marlbro' Sound'. Dismissing the need to raise 'everlasting Trophy's to his name', she underscores that the hero's image is permanently fixed in the heart: 'Our Churchills gloryes cannot be expres't/ But fix an awful Joy in ev'ry Breast'.

Egerton's poetic epiphany conforms to a moment of revelation, a generic feature of Whig epic verse, which serves to 'dramatize [...] an enthusiastic moment of poetic inspiration free from any trace of imitation'.[103] Womersley argues that this generic episode of afflatus is an aesthetic principle of the heroic sublime, directly linked with the Whiggish compulsion to 'enact […] the independence and "liberty" of modern British poetry by becoming its own exemplar'.[104] In Blackmore's *Advice*, for example, the point of revelation is reached when the speaker dramatically changes register to make an explicit movement into the sublime mode in a transformative moment when 'the poem becomes its own [heroic] model':[105]

[103] Womersley, *Augustan,* xxvi
[104] Ibid., xxvii.
[105] Ibid., xxvi.

> Tis done. Ive encompass'd my ambitious Aim,
> The Hero's Fire restores the Poet's Flame.
> The Inspiration comes, my Bosom glows,
> I strive with strong Enthusiastic Throws.
> Oh! I am all in Rapture, all on Fire,
> Give me, to ease the Muse's Pangs, the Lyre
> […] I rise, O whither am I caught away?
> I mount, I must the tow'ring Muse obey. (p.25)

In Egerton's case, her dramatic moment of insight – 'No, Cease Your Artfull Strains they'r useless here' – adopts a seemingly regressive stance which repudiates the need for heroic verse altogether. Confronted with the exclusively male model of the poet endorsed by the literary myth of Apollo and embodied by Blackmore's fraternity of male bards, Egerton's retreat is symptomatic of a compromised female poetic agency, registered in her dialogical and improvisational response to her encounter with the mainstream, masculinist tradition. More profoundly, in displaying the ultimate aesthetic liberty to contest the dominant mode altogether, Egerton engages with the fundamental nature of the sublime as the stylistic embodiment of liberty. The critical exploration in Egerton's 'Essay', her swan song and last-known work, depicts a woman writer's quest for artistic liberty whilst negotiating the limits of a dominant male tradition, and is highly revealing of the development of Egerton's identity as a poet and literary practice as a writer. The recurring motifs of twin male figures signal Egerton's identification with, and complex relations to, male authority: the two Whig heroes, William and Marlborough, who inspire her themes of patriotism, war and liberty; the male Gods, Apollo and Mercury, representing the dominant patriarchal culture, to whom she both appeals and challenges; the 'tunefull pair' of Addison and Philips, exemplars of the masculine, martial tradition, which underpins her authorial voice and final independent contest of the mode. In her treatment of the Muses, Egerton alludes both to her customary appeal to a higher female authority, and the community of literary women of which she is part, to posit powerful female figures whose energies are a match for the masculine heroic sublime. Finally, 'Essay' also engages with the notions of fame and glory, both for the warrior and the poet, for Marlborough and herself. Egerton's tribute to Marlborough ultimately enacts the independence and liberty of the Whig sublime by becoming its own literary exemplar. Despite her initial declaration to '[b]last the Trump of Flame,/ [to] Sound

victorious Marlbro's awfull Name' (p.1), the poem ends on a note of dismissal of earthly fame and glory, embodied by this final poetic work which never reached publication.

# 6

## Peace and the Hanoverian Succession: the public poems of Susanna Centlivre

Susanna Centlivre's role as a public poet has received scant critical attention. Yet Centlivre's public verse probably provides the best insight into her political engagement and contribution to the intense partisan dialogue of the day. This chapter focuses on Centlivre's political poetry published between 1712 and 1715, which engages with the two crucial partisan concerns that dominated the final years of Anne's reign: the conclusion of peace, and the Hanoverian succession. My reading examines Centlivre's intervention in the debate that surrounded the Treaty of Utrecht of 1713 or the 'Tory Peace' through her little-known verse address to Prince Eugene of Savoy, Marlborough's military ally in the continental war. The text will be discussed in relation to male-authored poems on the peace, focusing on a hitherto overlooked Tory–Whig exchange between Alexander Pope's *Windsor-Forest* (1713) and Centlivre's poem. The final section explores Centlivre's panegyrics to the Hanoverian royals, read alongside a range of the neglected succession literature of the Hanoverian accession, to demonstrate Centlivre's contributions to the poetic myth-making of a new Protestant dynasty.

### The Tory Peace and the Propaganda War

As we have seen, by the time Egerton composed her manuscript poem of 1708, the political tide was turning against Marlborough and Whig proponents of the war. The last four years of Anne's reign, 1710-14, was a period of virulent politicking and intense anxiety for Whiggish supporters. A war-weary public and the popular backlash against the impeachment of the High Church divine, Henry Sacheverell, brought about a massive Tory landslide in the election of October 1710.[1] The newly installed Tory government or the 'Peace Party', led by Robert Harley and Henry St John, accelerated negotiations to conclude the war, a process that Whigs predictably viewed as an abject capitulation to enemy France and the negation of years of military struggles on the continent.

[1] The Tories gained a majority of 151 in the Commons, the largest party majority since the accession of Anne; Gregg, *Queen Anne*, 324.

Coupled with the Queen's continuous ill health, the Tory-led peace negotiations with France, which included covert diplomacy at the expense of British allies in the war's Grand Alliance, brought genuine fears that Tory officials were also plotting a Jacobite restoration on the death of Anne.[2] In autumn 1711, the Whigs almost derailed the peace process when Whig peers of the Upper House insisted on the famous formula of 'No Peace without Spain', a refusal of any peace treaty that left Spain and the West Indies under the control of Louis XIV's grandson, Philip V.[3] This move was successfully countered by Harley in a highly controversial creation of twelve new Tory peers in order to push the motion through parliament. With Godolphin already out of the picture, the Tories stepped up their attacks on Marlborough, who was seen as the major impediment to the peace process.[4] In December 1711, the commissioner of public accounts reported to the Tory-controlled Commons that Marlborough received £62,000 between 1702 and 1711 for a contract to provide bread to the Army; by December 1711 the Duke was dismissed from his post as Captain-General of the Army and replaced by the Tory Duke of Ormonde.[5]

These pitched battles were fought on literary, as well as political fronts. In the run up to the Duke's disgrace and fall, Harley sponsored scathing attacks on Marlborough, including Jonathan Swift's influential *The Conduct of the Allies* (1711), which condemns Marlborough of war profiteering and working with his European allies to enrich himself at the expense of the British Treasury.[6] In a satiric essay on 'British ingratitude' published in the Tory-backed periodical, the *Examiner*, Swift accuses Marlborough of gross avarice using an ironic comparison with the Roman general, Marcus Crassus, and the cost for a Roman triumph.[7] The attacks continued even after Marlborough had fallen. In *The Fable of Midas* (1712), Swift allegorizes Marlborough as a rapacious King Midas guilty

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[2] Harley and St John were later revealed to have conducted secret (and legally treasonous) negotiations with the Pretender, James Stuart, which floundered when the latter refused to renounce Roman Catholicism. See Gregg, *Queen Anne*, 374-6.

[3] 'No Peace without Spain' was the Tory rebel, Lord Nottingham's famous motion; Gregg, *Queen Anne*, 347.

[4] Godolphin was dismissed by the Queen in August 1710, before the Tory electoral victory; Gregg, *Queen Anne*, 319.

[5] That Marlborough's army contracts were accepted practice of the time was underscored when Marlborough's successor, Ormonde, was permitted by the government to accept the same percentage payment for army bread contracts. See Hattendorf, 'Churchill, John'.

[6] A remarkable 11,000 copies of Swift's pamphlet were circulated, devastating Marlborough's reputation and leading to official charges of corruption. See Hattendorf, 'Churchill, John'.

[7] *Examiner* 16 (November 23, 1710).

of corruption in the form of '*Pensions, Bribes,* and *three per Cent* […and] *Places* and *Commissions* sold'.[8] Robert Harley also sponsored the Tory Manley, our women writers' *bete noire*, in her scathing attacks on Marlborough and Sarah Churchill in the scandal narratives, *the New Atalantis* (1709) and *Memoirs of Europe* (1710-11).[9]

Whiggish writers fought back in poems and polemics which vigorously supported Marlborough and the continental war, whilst stoking latent public fears that the Tories were plotting to place the exiled Catholic Pretender on the throne. Richard Steele published a spirited defence of the Duke – *The Englishman's Thanks to the Duke of Marlborough* (1712) – in which he pays tribute to Marlborough's 'Heroick' and 'God-like Virtue[s]', while condemning the 'Shameless Ruffian that should Attempt to Sully' the Duke's reputation, a probable reference to Jonathan Swift.[10] In his polemical pamphlets, *Our Ancestors as wise as we* (1712) and *Some New Proofs by which it Appears the Pretender is Truly James III* (1713), Thomas Burnet, son of the Whig bishop, Gilbert Burnet, defends Marlborough while attacking the Tories' peace policy with France and indicting their leaders as crypto-Jacobites.[11] In 1713 and 1714, Samuel Croxall, the Whiggish writer and clergyman, condemned the Tory peace in his political allegories, the two 'Original Cantos of Spencer'; but while Whiggish Spenserian verse of the 1690s channelled a sense of the 'marvellous' circumstances of the Revolution, Croxall uses 'magick' to dramatize the astonishing political machinations of his era.[12] His poem of 1713 allegorizes Britain's martial spirit as Spenser's war-like heroine, the 'fair *Britomart*' (p.8), imprisoned by the 'vile Enchantments' (p.8) of the wizard Archimago (Robert Harley), and guarded by his '*Hell-hounds foul*' (p.7) (Tory Peers). The portrait of Harley and his political machinations is scathing:

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**8** Jonathan Swift, *Poetical Works*, ed. Herbert Davis (Oxford University Press, 1967), 101.

9 See Carnell, *Biography*, 174-85.

10 Richard Steele, *Tracts and Pamphlets by Richard Steele*, ed. Rae Blanchard (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1944), 71.

11 See David Lemmings, 'Burnet, Sir Thomas,' in *ODNB* (Oxford University Press, 2004), accessed September 17, 2016, https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:4563/10.1093/ref:odnb/4069.

12 Samuel Croxall, *An Original Canto of Spencer* [etc] (London, 1713); Samuel Croxall, *Another Original Canto of Spencer* [etc] (London, 1714). Subsequent references are to these editions. For a reading of these poems, see Christine Gerrard, 'Political passions,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Eighteenth-Century Poetry*, ed. John Sitter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 39-40.

> In vile Enchantments all excelled He,
> And whoever dar'd him to oppose,
> Soon fell, or swiftly did before him flee;
> Or else to them he gave a magick Dose. (p.8)

Many of the Whig writers who participated in the heated polemical debate were friends or associates of Centlivre's. Steele, as we know, was a friend and colleague of Centlivre's, who had evidently advised her against some of her more overt political statements.[13] Thomas Burnet was also a friend and correspondent of Centlivre's, who provided a prologue to her comedy, *The Wonder*.[14] Another connection was Ambrose Philips, whose *Pastorals* voiced, in part, Whiggish despondence about the succession crisis. Philips was a member of an informal literary circle to which Centlivre belonged, and he contributed an epilogue to *The Wonder*.[15] As is well known, Philips became embroiled in a partisan-inflected 'Pastoral war' with the Tory Alexander Pope, a literary controversy that reached its peak in 1712-13 when partisanship intensified in the run-up to the Tory peace.[16] It was against this background of virulent political and literary battles that Centlivre made the most outspoken partisan political statements of her career. Soon after peace negotiations officially began at The Hague in early 1709, Centlivre articulates her belligerent Whiggish stance by deriding the Tory promoters of the peace process: '[s]ome snivling Cits, wou'd have a Peace for spight,/ To starve those Warriours who so bravely fight'.[17] In a poetic tribute to Charles Montagu, Centlivre condemns the 'Traytor, *Harley'* for the 'Necessary Peers,/Created in those Four Black Years'.[18] In 1712, while a Tory government was firmly in place, Centlivre's 'notorious whiggish Epilogue' to her *Perplex'd Lovers* (1712) (performed on 19 January 1712 soon after Marborough's dismissal by the Queen), pays tribute to the Duke as the '*ONE'* in pointed defiance of his public

[13] In *A Woman's Case*, Centlivre claims that Steele advised her against the dedication of her play *The Wonder*, to the Hanoverian heir, the Duke of Cambridge, which he considered too risky a gambit to adopt while Anne was still on the throne. For more details, see pp.242-3.
[14] See Bowyer, *Centlivre,* 154.
[15] For a contemporary account identifying Centlivre and Philips as members of an informal literary circle, which included Anthony Hammond, Martha Fowke and Jane Wiseman, see Duncan Campbell, *Secret Memoirs of the late Mr Duncan Campbel* [*sic*] [etc] (London, 1732), 131-2.
[16] For the partisan literary 'Pastoral war', see Annabel M. Patterson, *Pastoral and Ideology: Virgil to Valéry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 206-13.
[17] Susanna Centlivre, epilogue to *The Busie Body* (London, 1709).
[18] Susanna Centlivre, 'On the Right Honourable Charles Earl of Halifax being made Knight of the Garter,' *Patriot* (November 16-18, 1714).

disgrace.[19] The sentiment was viewed as so controversial at the time that the stage managers insisted that the play was performed on the first night without the epilogue, which was meant to have been spoken by Anne Oldfield.[20] The original epilogue was later published with the play on February 22 and displays Centlivre's strong partisan sympathies for the Duke whom she considers an 'equal' to his military ally, Eugene of Savoy:

> A Prince, whose Wisdom, Valour, and Success,
> The gazing World with Acclamations bless;
> By no great Captain in past Times outdone,
> And in the present equal'd but by *ONE*.[21]

The *Perplex'd Lovers* was also published with a highly revealing preface in which Centlivre expresses her indignation about the 'ill Fate' of her drama which was reduced to 'being acted the first Day without an Epilogue'.[22] She blames a Tory plot – 'there were Parties forming against it' – for the cool reception of her play which only achieved a run of three days.[23] Centlivre also made an outspoken statement boldly praising the Duke and implicitly condemning the Tories in one of the most explicitly partisan declarations of her career:

> The sinking of my Play cut me not half so deep as the Notion I had, that there cou'd be People of this Nation so ungrateful as not to allow a single Compliment to a Man that has done such Wonders for it. I am not prompted by any private Sinister End, having never been oblig'd to the Duke of Marlborough, otherways than as I shar'd in common with my Country; as I am an English Woman, I think my self oblig'd to acknowledge my Obligations to his Grace for the many Glorious Conquests he has attain'd, and the many Hazards he has to run, to establish us a Nation free from the Insults of a Foreign Power. I know not what they call Whigs, or how they distinguish between them and Tories: But if the Desire to see my Country secur'd from the Romish Yoke, and flourish by a Firm Lasting Honourable Peace, to the Glory of the best of Queens, who deservedly holds the Balance of all Europe, be a Whig, then I am one, else not.[24]

Centlivre was sufficiently roused by the ill-treatment of Marlborough to speak forcefully on his behalf and defend her own actions in doing so. In her pointed assertion of her identity as an 'English Woman', Centlivre was joining the partisan fray over competing versions of national identity, at a

[19] Susanna Centlivre, epilogue to *The Perplex'd Lovers* (London, 1712).
[20] See Bowyer, *Centlivre*, 145.
[21] Centlivre, epilogue to *The Perplex'd Lovers*.
[22] Centlivre, preface to *The Perplex'd Lovers*.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.

time when both Whigs and Tories were claiming to be the true guardians of the country's interest. As Williams points out, during the partisan conflict over peace, the Tories asserted the figure of 'John Bull' in opposition to 'Dutch frogs', while Whig propagandists like Richard Steele used the patriotic label of 'Englishman' to underscore their objections to the government's perceived capitulation to French interest.[25] Centlivre's 'Englishwoman's' defence of Marlborough parallels Steele's tribute to the Duke published in the same year: '*The Englishman's Thanks to the Duke of Marlborough*'. Disingenously claiming no knowledge of 'what they call Whigs', Centlivre proceeds to describe some pointedly Whiggish priorities: a Britain secure from the tyranny of 'the Romish Yoke' and 'the Insults of a Foreign Power', which also plays an active and instrumental role in preserving 'the Balance of all Europe'. These same bold, Whiggish sentiments are articulated in a poem appended to the published version of the play: 'To his Illustrious Highness Prince Eugene of Savoy' (1712). In the next section, I examine this tribute to Marlborough's military ally, in the context of the intense partisan debate that surrounded the negotiations that ended the war and concluded the Treaty of Utrecht of 1713.

### 'To his Illustrious Highness Prince Eugene of Savoy' (1712)

Centlivre's verse address to Eugene of Savoy was published in February 1712, while the Prince was on a diplomatic visit to England from January to March 1712 to divert the British government away from its peace policy. Eugene was the commander of the Imperial Hapsburg forces and a hero of the Whigs due to his role as Marlborough's military partner in the continental war, who helped the Duke secure the Allies' brilliant victories in the battles of Blenheim, Oudenarde, and Malplaquet.[26] The Savoyard prince's visit to London was a social success: Eugene was welcomed by the Queen and officials at court, and feted at a number of glittering receptions.[27] However, it proved a political disappointment to the Whigs as the Prince failed to convince Anne and her ministers to alter their course, and they remained determined to end the war regardless of their

[25] Williams, *Literary Culture*, 157.
[26] See Derek McKay, *Prince Eugene of Savoy* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977), 77-127.
[27] See Gregg, *Queen Anne*, 353.

allies. Centlivre capitalized on Whiggish hopes raised by Eugene's visit to declare her support for both Eugene and Marlborough and her belligerent opposition to the peace process then in progress. Her efforts were rewarded by the Prince with 'a Present of a very weighty Gold Snuff-box' valued at thirty-five pounds.[28]

Centlivre's poetic tribute to Eugene of Savoy was one of the early responses to the debate on the ongoing Tory pursuit of peace. Robert Horn's survey of war poems of 1712 includes works 'of which a considerable number are related to the great events of the year, particularly the secret manoeuvrings towards the peace'.[29] Horn identifies five verse addresses to Eugene published in 1712 (two of which are Tory), but fails to include Centlivre's offering.[30] Published on 22 February 1712, Centlivre's poem preceded better-known, male-authored poems on the peace, including the Whig Thomas Tickell's *On the Prospect of Peace* (1713) published in October 1712, and Thomas Parnell's Tory offering, *The Horse and the Olive*, printed in March 1713. Centlivre's work was also published more than a year before Pope's poetic celebration of the peace, *Windsor-Forest*, made its appearance in print in March 1713, three weeks before the Treaty of Utrecht was concluded. My reading includes a close comparison of the two poems by Centlivre and Pope to demonstrate an intriguing Tory–Whig exchange between the two works, highly revealing of Centlivre's embeddedness in the partisan literary conversation of the time involving Pope, Addison and Tickell. While my analysis makes the case that we might consider Centlivre's poem as an important and so far unrecognized intertext for Pope's later-published poem, I suggest further that Centlivre's poem may have been in dialogue with earlier unpublished versions of *Windsor-Forest*.

Centlivre's verse address draws upon motifs and conceits associated with Royalist-Stuart culture, deftly refashioned to articulate a Whiggish vision of the Peace. The poem takes the form of a dream sequence consisting of a succession of self-contained dream episodes. In the first episode, the speaker lies sleepless in bed, plagued by 'Troubles and Distractions', suggestive of Whiggish anxiety and despondence during the Tory progress to peace:

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[28] Mottley, *Dramatic Poets*, 190.
[29] Horn, *Marlborough*, 364.
[30] Ibid., 364-420.

> One Night with various Thoughts I musing lay,
> Reflecting on the Business of the Day;
> At length these words got Passage from my Breast,
> And thus the Sadness of my Soul express'd
> Oh! when will *Faction* leave my Native Shore,
> And *Britons* labour to be *Slaves* no more?
> When shall true Merit meet with due Regard,
> And *Friends* to *France*, be *England's Foes* declar'd?
> That once perform'd, my Nation wou'd have Peace,
> And all our Troubles and Distractions Cease. (p.56)

Centlivre catalogues her terms for peace, firstly asserting that 'Faction' should disappear – an allusion to the virulent partisan struggles that accompanied the Tory negotiations for peace, which, as we have seen, impacted the production and reception of her play. Centlivre then makes a suggestive reference to the yoke of slavery under which her fellow Britons are labouring; the term 'slavery' has strong Whiggish connotations of life under the tyranny of absolutism and Catholicism, and could refer to the ongoing danger posed by Catholic France. In the light of widespread Whig fears of another Stuart restoration, however, it can also be seen as an implicit gesture to the threat of a return of the Catholic Pretender, James Stuart. Centlivre's demands for peace include the condition that 'true Merit meet[s] with due Regard' – a pointed signal to the recent fate of the Duke of Marlborough, who in Centlivre's eyes was a patriotic saviour of the nation who had been shabbily treated by the Tory government. Centlivre then asserts a somewhat enigmatic demand that '*Friends* to *France*, be *England's Foes* declar'd'. While France's war allies – Spain and Bavaria – have long been declared Britain's enemies, the parties friendly to France could refer to either the Stuart Pretender, living in France under the protection of Louis XIV, or more provocatively, to the presiding Tory government, led by Harley and St John, who were in the midst of secret and treasonable negotiations with the Pretender in exile. Centlivre's notion of an honourable peace is a distinctly Whiggish one, incorporating the neutralization of the Catholic threat from both France and the Stuart Pretender; the restoration of Marlborough to a position of dignity and public regard; and the indictment of 'treasonous' British parties friendly to France.

The next verse paragraph depicts another dream episode, in which the speaker is transported to a seaside scene on '*Albion's* chalky Cliffs' (p.56) to witness the glorious message of Eugene's

impending arrival. The poem celebrates Eugene's appearance in the British Isles using the 'return and celebration' motifs characteristic of Royalist laudatory verse and Stuart court masques, reworked to express Centlivre's Whiggish aims. Centlivre evokes the mythical figures of Neptune, Britannia, tritons and nereids to glorify and welcome Britain's military ally. Eugene's arrival is heralded by Neptune, the king of the seas, whose message is delivered by a triton riding on the back of a dolphin; the triton bows to Britannia and proclaims his *'Embassie*' (p.56):

> From *Neptune, Lord* of all the wealthy *Main*,
> I come, great *Eugene's* Entry to proclaim:
> His out-stretch'd Sails the Winds with Pleasure fill,
> And ev'ry saucy Storm's commanded to be still.
> The *Nereids* all around his Vessel play,
> While Shoals of *Tritons* guard his liquid Way. (p.56)

The figures recall, for example, John Tatham's Restoration water pageants for Charles II, which feature the mythical creatures of tritons, Thesis, Father Thames and Isis.[31] The god Neptune was a key propaganda image employed to promote Charles II in panegyrics of the early Restoration years; with special appeal to the country's sea-faring people, the figure of Neptune represents the monarch's power over the elements, usually associated with the iconography of a rider of a powerful beast.[32] Indeed, Centlivre's depiction of Eugene's arrival by sea to a glorious welcome by the British people harkens to this other royal arrival more than fifty years earlier – the restoration of Charles II to the throne – an event celebrated in numerous Restoration panegyrics.[33] Centlivre's rendering of '*Albion's* chalky Cliffs' gestures to the 'approaching cliffes of *Albion*' in John Dryden's panegyric to Charles II, *Astraea Redux* (1660), in which the white garb of England's cliffs marks the 'penitence and sorrow' the country bears for its exiled King.[34] Centlivre's poem also recalls the Royalist Katherine Philips' Restoration panegyric to Charles II – 'Arion on a Dolphin, To his Majestie at his passadge into England' (1660) – which employs the same classical motifs to celebrate the return of

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[31] For Restoration royal pageants, see Kevin Sharpe, *Rebranding Rule: The Restoration and Revolution Monarchy, 1660-1714* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2013), 163.
[32] See Backscheider, *Spectacular Politics*, 16.
[33] For a survey of Restoration panegyrics to Charles II, see Sharpe, *Rebranding Rule*, 46.
[34] *The Works of John Dryden,* eds. Edward N. Hooker and others (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1956-2000), 1:29.

the King, who is carried across the channel by 'Winds and Seas,/ Swift as Desire and calm as Peace'.[35] Centlivre's poem captures some of the amatory aspects of Royalist engagement in her imaging of the 'saucy Storm's' and 'Winds with Pleasure fill' that accompany the messenger of Eugene's arrival. Kathryn King has highlighted 'the ways in which women appropriated the poetic practices of the royalist predecessors as part of the larger process of Whig cultural self-definition'.[36] In a reading of Elizabeth Singer Rowe's pastoral poetry, she argues that Rowe employs the female courtly tradition of Katherine Philips and Aphra Behn to declare her allegiance to William – in effect 'to plant a Whig flag in the very centre of royalist poetic territory'.[37] We see the same process at work in Centlivre's panegyric:

> Advance, *Britannia*, to receive this Chief;
> The *Tyrant*'s Scourge, and the Oppress't's Relief:
> A nobler Weight thy Seas cou'd never boast,
> Since they the Great, the Glorious *William* loft. (p.56)

While Eugene's arrival is celebrated on similar thematic and stylistic terms as that of Royalist laudatory verse, Centlivre draws upon these motifs to underscore her Whiggish loyalties. The king travelling over the seas, to whom Eugene is compared, is no Stuart but 'the Great, the Glorious *William*', the Whiggish ideal of a warrior-king whose continental strategies were continued by this hero of the War of the Spanish Succession, Eugene of Savoy. As discussed in my chapter on Egerton's poetry, Whig heroic verse of William's era was concerned with the 'rhetorical convergence of nation with monarch, and monarch as soldier'.[38] In Centlivre's poem, the 'return and celebration' tropes of Royalist literature are reconstituted with the familiar Whiggish impulse to privilege the martial and heroic aspects of the monarch. Like William, the architect of the continental war and Father of Whiggish liberty, Eugene is cast as a saviour battling against the 'tyrannical' Catholic forces of France: 'The *Tyrant*'s Scourge, and the Oppress't's Relief'. In contrast to Dryden's and Philips' imaging of the returning king, Charles II, as a mild and merciful monarch who heals the

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[35] Katherine Philips, *The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: The Matchless Orinda,* ed. Patrick Thomas, vol. 1*, The Poems* (Stump Cross: Stump Cross Books, 1990), 71-73.
[36] King, 'Political Verse,' 214.
[37] Ibid., 215.
[38] Williams, *Literary Culture*, 127.

nation's wounds through the dispensation of justice and mercy, Eugene, like his militant forebear, William III, is cast in the image of a warrior-king, whose 'dauntless Courage' (p.56) and 'Free-born Mind' (p.56) liberate Britain from Catholic 'tyranny' and 'oppression'.[39]

Centlivre's poem also echoes the Williamite 'peace poems' of the late 1690s, including John Hughes' *The Triumph of Peace* (1698) - a tribute to William III's triumphant return following the Peace of Ryswick of 1697 which ended The Nine Years War against France.[40] Hughes' extravagant panegyric celebrates William's homecoming using a lush procession of deities: the King, equal to both Mars and Jove in his 'Heroick Air' (p.3), returns to the British isle accompanied by the allegorical Goddess, Peace, and heralded by Apollo and 'his Golden lyre' (p.3). Like Centlivre's address, Hughes' poem is resplendent with the Restoration conceits of Neptune, tritons and dolphins. A comparison between the two poems reveals close verbal parallels:

> Before, old Neptune smooths the liquid way;
> Obsequious Tritons on the Surface play;
> And sportful Dolphins, with nimble Glance;
> To the bright Sun their glitt'ring Scales advance. (*The Triumph of Peace*, p.3)

> From *Neptune, Lord* of all the wealthy *Main*,
> I come, great *Eugene's* Entry to proclaim: […]
> The *Nereids* all around his Vessel play,
> While Shoals of *Tritons* guard his liquid Way. ('Prince Eugene of Savoy', p.56)

The parallels between Centlivre's and Hughes' poems signal the importance Centlivre places on Eugene's diplomatic visit as an opportunity for prolonging the war, an event she celebrates almost as extravagantly as her Whiggish forebear did the return of the triumphant warrior-king, William III, at the conclusion of his most ambitious military endeavour. The deployment of traditional Royalist-Stuart iconography in Centlivre's and Hughes' poems attests to the longevity of stock Restoration conceits, which were appropriated by Whig panegyrists during both the reigns of William and Anne. Centlivre and Hughes draw upon the classical idiom of Stuart laudatory verse to mythologize and authorize the coming of their Whiggish heroes – 'Glorious *William*' and the 'great *Eugene*' – in effect

[39] See, for example, Dryden's treatment of Charles II in *Astraea Redux* as '*Long-Suff'ring, Goodness, Mercy* in his Name'; Dryden, *Works,* 1:29.
[40] John Hughes, *The Triumph of Peace* (London, 1698); all references are to this edition.

annexing the poetic domain of their Royalist predecessors to further the cause of Whiggism. The mythic tropes beloved of Stuart panegyrists are co-opted to enhance the aura and prestige of Whig heroic figures and to bolster and legitimize the Whiggish agenda.

In the next dream episode of Centlivre's poem, the speaker is transported to a riverside retreat on '*Thames* fair Banks' (p.57); this episode engages with another Royalist theme, that of 'the green retreat'.[41] Centlivre depicts an idyllic green landscape – 'a lovely Silvan Scene,/ Nature renew'd, and ev'ry Bough was green' (p.57) – populated by the mythical creatures of Father Thames, Augusta and the Goddess Fame. This verse paragraph has clear echoes and parallels in Pope's *Windsor-Forest*: his Tory paean to the Peace, famously set in the 'green Retreats' (1) and the 'opening Glades' (21) of the royal forest of Windsor. Both Pope's and Centlivre's poems include an extended scene on the riverside Thames:

> 'To *Thames*'s Banks which fragrant Breezes fill'. (*Windsor-Forest*, 263)
>
> 'On Thames Fair Banks I quick as Thought was thrown'. ('Prince Eugene of Savoy', p.57)

Both poems depict the mythical figure of Augusta, symbolizing the city of London, on highly similar terms; Centlivre praises 'Augusta's stately piles' (p.57) whilst Pope lauds '*Augusta's* glitt'ring Spires' (377). The most resonant echo between Pope's and Centlivre's poems features the figure of Father Thames rising dramatically from his 'oozy bed':

> 'In that blest Moment, from his Oozy Bed
> Old Father *Thames* advanc'd his rev'rend Head'. (*Windsor-Forest*, 329-30)
>
> 'Augusta heard, rais'd her awful Head,
> While Thamatis forsook his owzy Bed'. ('Prince Eugene of Savoy', p.57)

While the verbal parallels between Centlivre's and Pope's verse are suggestive, the question of influence is difficult to establish due to the complex range of sources that Pope had drawn upon in his depiction of Father Thames, Augusta and the riverside Thames, including elements from Royalist

[41] For the political symbolism of 'the green retreat' in Royalist poetry, see Murray G. H. Pittock, *Poetry and Jacobite Politics in Eighteenth-century Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 110-11.

panegyrics and Stuart court masques which also appear influential on Centlivre's poem.[42] Thus it may be that both Centlivre and Pope had drawn upon the same range of common sources from Royalist Stuart literature, including the panegyrics of John Dryden. Nevertheless, in view of the suggestive verbal echoes, the common interest in the same crucial contemporary issue – the impending Peace – in these two poems published just over a year of each other, it is possible that Pope may have had Centlivre's poem, amongst other more recognized sources in mind when he composed his Tory poetic response to the Peace.

But although *Windsor-Forest* was published more than a year after Centlivre's poem, the issue of influence is further complicated by the complex and uneven composition history of Pope's poem.[43] In Pope's own account, which is not entirely consistent, the poem was composed in two parts: the first part in 1704 or 'at the same time' as his *Pastorals*, and the later part, from line 290 onwards (which includes the section on Father Thames and Augusta), either in 1710, 1712 or 1713, depending on which of Pope's series of contradictory notes is referred to.[44] As critics contend, Pope's early version was probably revised to present a more ambitious, politically resonant vision of the impending peace.[45] According to correspondence between Pope's patron, Sir William Trumbull, and the latter's nephew, Ralph Bridges, some early version of the poem appears to have existed in 1707.[46] A manuscript in Pope's own hand was circulating by 1712,[47] although we can only speculate on the extent of its circulation and readers.[48] A clue is provided by Addison's famous *Spectator* essay of 30 October 1712, which 'anticipates a rush of poems celebrating the Peace of Utrecht, and

[42] For *Windsor-Forest*'s resemblance to Royalist panegyrics and court masques, see Pat Rogers, *The Symbolic Design of Windsor-Forest: Iconography, Pageant, and Prophecy in Pope's Early Work (*Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004), 23-55, 183-216.

[43] For a useful account of the composition history of *Windsor-Forest*, see Pat Rogers, *Pope and the Destiny of the Stuarts: History, Politics, and Mythology in the Age of Queen Anne* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 11-20.

[44] See E. Audra and Aubrey Williams, introduction to *Windsor-Forest* in Pope, *Pastoral Poetry*, 125-6.

[45] Pat Rogers believes that Pope began to reconstruct *Windsor-Forest* in early 1712; Rogers, *Pope*, 13. See too, Norman Ault, *New Light on Pope: With Some Additions to His Poetry Hitherto Unknown* (London: Methuen, 1949), 28-35.

[46] *Historical Manuscripts Commission. Report on the Manuscripts of the Marquess of Downshire*, vol. 1, part 2 (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1924), 853.

[47] See Rogers, *Pope*, 13.

[48] Schmitz suggests that the manuscript probably circulated amongst the same readers as Pope's *Pastorals* which include Whig personages such as Charles Montagu, William Congreve and Samuel Garth; Robert Morell Schmitz, *Pope's Windsor-Forest 1712: A Study of the Washington University Holograph* (St Louis: Washington University, 1952), 8.

includes a list of rules for their proper conduct'.[49] In his essay, Addison promotes Tickell's *On the Prospect of Peace*, while making pointed commentary indicating that he was familiar with Pope's *Windsor-Forest*.[50] Although Pope and Addison still maintained good relations at this time, Addison's article on 'Heathen Mythology', which condemns the poetic use of classical apparatus, makes implicit criticism of Pope's yet unpublished poem: Addison criticizes poets for mythologizing modern action through 'the Exploits of a River-God' (4:362), and in an aside to Pope's youthful age (Pope was then 24 years old, and later claimed that he had started the poem at the age of 16), contends that these 'trifling antiquated fables' are works that are 'unpardonable in a Poet that is past Sixteen' (4:363). Robert Cummings argues that these allusions suggest that Addison had read a manuscript of *Windsor-Forest*, and felt some 'chagrin' about Pope's imaging of Thames' 'oozy bed' – a possible sly reference to Addison's own earlier poem.[51] Addison's *The Campaign* includes a passage asserting that only feeble literary efforts require the aid of pagan mythology: 'Gods may descend in factions from the skies,/ And Rivers from their oozy beds arise' (473-4). As Cumming contends, '[w]hen Pope introduces the deified Thames, rising from his ''Oozy Bed'' […] it cannot but have seemed to Addison that the trespass was particularly calculated as a slight on his own fastidiousness'.[52] While it appears likely that Addison had become familiar with *Windsor-Forest* by October 1712, we do not know exactly when Pope's manuscript began circulating and can only speculate on whether Centlivre had come to know about the poem too. We have little information on Centlivre's and Addison's relations; however, they were both contemporary dramatists who must have at least been known to each other, and Centlivre was friends with several members of Addison's circle, including Richard Steele, Nicholas Rowe, Thomas Burnet and Ambrose Philips (as I will show, Addison also appears familiar with Centlivre's poetry). It is tempting to speculate that Addison's close ally, Richard Steele, who was also a mutual friend of both Pope's and Centlivre's,

[49] John Richardson, 'Alexander Pope's *Windsor Forest*: Its Context and Attitudes toward Slavery,' *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 35, no. 1 (2001): 144.
[50] Joseph Addison, *Spectator* 523 (October 30, 1712) in *Spectator*, 4:361-4. Subsequent page references in the text are to this edition.
[51] Robert Cummings, 'Addison's "Inexpressible Chagrin" and Pope's Poem on the Peace,' *Yearbook of English Studies* 18 (1988): 144, 151.
[52] Ibid., 151.

could have been a source of information on Pope's manuscript for Centlivre.[53]

It is also possible to argue that Pope was still working on the later part of his poem throughout 1712, and the similarities between the depictions of Thames and Augusta in the two poems imply that Pope made use of these motifs in Centlivre's panegyric published in February 1712.[54] Joseph Hone has recently argued for the influence of contemporary Tory panegyrics on Pope's *Windsor-Forest*, which has been overlooked by critics, but the possible connections between Pope's and Centlivre's poems from opposing political perspectives on the peace have also yet to be recognized.[55] We are not aware of the details of Centlivre's and Pope's relations at this time; certainly they grew to become partisan antagonists later, as when Pope included Centlivre in his attack on the publisher Edmund Curll in 1716, and satirized her in *The Dunciad* (1728) as one of the 'slip-shod Muses'.[56] Addison's *Spectator* essay may have implicitly referred to Centlivre's poem too when he criticizes poets who 'make Prince Eugene a Favourite of Mars': Centlivre's address to Eugene includes a passage lauding the Prince as a '*God* of *War*' (p.57). While critics have tended to focus on Addison's essay to analyze the literary debate between Addison, Pope and Tickell, there is, towards the end of the article, a suggestive commentary on women writers which has been entirely overlooked. After his jibe at Centlivre's imaging of Eugene as the god Mars, Addison may have made a further reference to Centlivre's poem when he proclaims an exemption of female poets from his proscription on the use of mythology:

> In short, I expect no Pagan Agent shall be introduced, or any Fact related which a Man cannot give Credit to with a good Conscience. Provided always, that nothing herein contained shall extend, or be construed to extend, to several of the Female Poets in this Nation, who shall still be left in full Possession of their Gods and Goddesses, in the same manner as if this Paper had never been written. (4:364)

The exclusion of female poets (effectively categorizing them with naive poets under the age of

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[53] For the budding friendship between Pope and Steele at this time, see Maynard Mack, *Alexander Pope: A Life* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 208-10.

[54] Pope's Twickenham editors argue that Pope continued to revise his poem until just before publication; Audra and Williams, introduction, 131.

[55] Joseph Hone, 'Pope and the Politics of Panegyric,' *Review of English Studies* 66, no. 273 (2015): 106-23.

[56] Alexander Pope, *The Dunciad*, ed. James Sutherland, vol. 5 of *The Twickenham Edition*, 162. For a fuller account of what was to become an antagonistic relationship between Pope and Centlivre, see Bowyer, *Centlivre*, 191-206.

sixteen) by this elder statesman of Whig culture suggests a patronizing attitude towards women writers, who are perceived to operate outside of the dominant male 'republic of letters'. As we have seen from my discussion of Blackmore's *Advice*, the Whiggish confederation of poets comprises an androcentric collection of male bards who seek to glorify military heroism and national achievements. If Addison took offence at Centlivre's treatment of 'oozy bed', he did not appear to show it. Indeed, the common use of the phrase 'oozy bed' by Addison, Pope and Centlivre implies aspects of a hidden literary conversation of which we were hitherto unaware. Addison's critique of women writers certainly seems to adopt a teasing, good-natured tone: 'the Female Poets in this Nation […] shall still be left in full Possession of their Gods and Goddesses'. While his reference to the imagery of the god Mars signals Addison's familiarity with Centlivre's verse, it could be that his exemption, under the guise of the chivalrous courtesies of gender, is underpinned by Addison's implicit approval of Centlivre's Whiggish reworking of classical motifs (including Pope's Tory poetic version) to achieve partisan, pro-war ends. This adds an interesting dimension to the ways in which contemporary debate on partisan political issues plays out through discussions of literary forms and poetic tradition. Addison, as we know, avoids appearing overtly factional in his critiques. His *Spectator* essay praises the Whiggish writers, Thomas Tickell and Ambrose Philips on grounds of poetic form and themes: Tickell's 'noble…Performance' (4:361) in his *On the Prospect of Peace* is lauded on the basis of the poem's avoidance of pagan mythology, while Philips' *Pastorals* is commended for substituting 'Antiquated Fables' with the native 'superstitious Mythology' (4:363) of British shepherds and rural folk. In the case of Centlivre, whose verse is only alluded to in Addison's critique, we can surmise that Addison's implicit and partisan approval of her thoroughly Whiggish poem is expressed through an exemption of his own prohibitions on pagan mythology, justified by the difference in gender.

Another possible explanation for the close parallels between Pope's and Centlivre's poems is that both these writers had drawn from a common resource, principally the Restoration panegyrics of John Dryden. While river gods are a stock motif in Stuart court masques, the language and imagery employed in Pope's and Centlivre's treatment of Thames and Augusta can be traced to Dryden's

*Annus Mirabilis* (1667), a panegyric to Charles II, published after the devastation of the Great Fire of London. The relevant passage in Dryden reads as follows:

> Old Father *Thames* rais'd up his reverend head,
> But fear'd the fate of *Simoeis* would return:
> Deep in his *Ooze* he sought his sedgy bed.
> And shrunk his waters back into his Urn.[57]

Pope's depiction of Father Thames is indebted to this passage in *Annus Mirabilis*, employing the terms 'sedgy', 'waters', 'urn', and converting 'Ooze' into 'oozy'.[58] It is possible that Centlivre too borrowed her treatment of Thames from Dryden, whom she admired and to whom she paid tribute in *The Nine Muses*. Similarly, the figure of Augusta rendered by Pope and Centlivre can be traced to the ancient name for London revived by Dryden in *Annus Mirabilis*. In the poem, Dryden depicts the 'great' Augusta or city of London rising like a phoenix from the flames of the Great Fire: 'More great then humane, now and more *August*,/ New deif'd she from her fires does rise'.[59]

Other later poems by both Tory and Whig writers also employ strikingly similar idiom to that used in Dryden's *Annus Mirabilis*. Dryden's own elegy to Charles II, *Threnodia Augustalis* (1685), repeats his earlier language and imagery, although in this case the phrases refer to a personified ocean: 'While starting from his Oozy Bed/ Th' asserted Ocean rears his reverend Head'.[60] William Diaper's *Dryades* (1713), a Tory poem in praise of Henry St John, employs the same familiar idiom: 'But th' Ocean-Gods, rouz'd from their oozy Beds,/ The Trident grasp, and nod their reedy heads'.[61] Critics have not noted, however, the recurrence of similar language in post-Revolution Whig verse. Hughes' *The Triumph of Peace*, a work which, as discussed, was likely to have influenced Centlivre, reveals vividly similar imagery in which Britain is personified as a sea-goddess: 'And lovely *Albion* from her watry Bed,/ Beauteous above the rest, rears her auspicious Head' (p.2). In his depiction of the clamorous crowds accompanying William's victorious return to London, Hughes adopts the

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[57] Dryden, *Works*, 1:94.
[58] See Rogers, *Symbolic Design*, 203.
[59] Dryden, *Works*, 1:1177-8.
[60] Dryden, *Works*, 3:107.
[61] Willliam Diaper, *Dryades*, in Chadwyck-Healey Literature Collections (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey, 1992), lines 451-2, accessed 12 March 2017, http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xr i:ilcs&rft_id=xri:ilcs:ft:ep2:Z000338340:0.

ancient name for the city revived by Dryden: 'Loud Acclamations thro' the Valleys ring,/ While to *Augusta*'s Walls the Crowd attend their King' (p.7).

Clearly, 'oozy' and 'watery' beds and the raising of various deities' 'auspicious' and 'reverend' heads were stock phrases used by writers of both political persuasions, particularly after they were popularized by Dryden in the 1660s. Indeed, the shared pool of oft-repeated tropes and conceits renders it impossible to establish a chain of direct allusion. While it is possible that Centlivre borrowed directly from Dryden's panegyric in her treatment of Thames and Augusta, there is little other resemblance in ideas, concepts and design between their two poems.[62] By contrast, a close comparison between Pope's and Centlivre's poems on the Peace indicates that the nature of the parallels between these two works goes beyond superficial verbal echoes, suggesting that Centlivre probably engaged with the structural design and thematic concepts of Pope's Tory paean to peace, which she adapted to suit her own Whiggish emphasis on prolonging the war. In Pope's *Windsor-Forest*, Father Thames arises from his 'oozy bed' upon the Queen's proclamation of peace: 'At length great *ANNA* said---Let Discord cease!/ She said, the World obey'd, and all was *Peace*!' (327-8). Pope's Tory discourse configures the Queen as a force of divine monarchical authority: Anne's words, like God's, create Peace out of chaos, without reference to the years of military struggles and victories that helped bring about the conclusion of peace.[63] Anne's divine fiat rouses the two deities; Father Thames emerges from the water – 'His Tresses dropt with Dews […] His shining Horns diffus'd a golden Gleam' (331-2) – followed by the figure of Augusta: 'The figur'd Streams in Waves of Silver roll'd,/ And on their Banks *Augusta* rose in Gold' (335-6). Centlivre's poem reveals striking parallels with this scene, refashioned to articulate a very different notion of peace. In Centlivre's version, the mythical figures of Thames and Augusta are similarly deployed as important structural devices; they are awakened, however, not by Anne's proclamation but by the rousing summons of the Goddess Fame. Thus the source of authority shifts in Centlivre's poem from a peace-affirming Queen to the powerful female figure of the Goddess Fame; whereas Anne is 'the "Goddess"

[62] However, Rogers argues that *Annus Mirabilis* was a strong, direct influence on *Windsor-Forest* with both works sharing similar rhetorical strategies and aims; Rogers, *Symbolic Design*, 199.
[63] See Hone, 'Panegyric,' 111-6.

nurturing [Pope's] sylvan landscape of Windsor', Centlivre's green retreat is dominated by Fame, this deity of glory and renown:[64]

> Here I beheld a lovely Silvan Scene,
> Nature renew'd, and ev'ry Bough was green:
> Here tuneful Birds their choicest Notes prepare,
> And Arromatick Scents fill'd all the Ambient Air;
> When a bright *Form* expanded on the Wing,
> Did to my Sense Surprize and Wonder bring.
> Her Golden Tresses by the Wind were born,
> And num'rous Eyes did ev'ry Part adorn:
> […] And in her Hand a golden *Trumpet* bore:
> She list, methought, yet seem'd to grow so high,
> Her Head aspir'd to reach a distant Sky. (p.57)

The figure of Fame brings connotations of power, glory and, as I shall argue, war. Centlivre's detailed description of the goddess is alert to medieval, Renaissance and ancient templates, which she carefully manipulates to render Fame as a figure of virtue concerned with military glory. In the classical and medieval traditions, Fame is an ambiguous figure who can represent either good or evil; Centlivre's treatment of Fame, however, is unequivocally positive.[65] Her description of Fame's 'num'rous Eyes' conforms to Virgil's depiction in *The Aeneid* of the Goddess' numerous 'watchful eyes', but eschews the ancient's more disturbing description of Fame's many mouths and tongues which connote the spread of rumour and news.[66] Centlivre's Fame closely resembles the appearance of the morally correct figure of 'Good Fame' in Ben Jonson's *The Masque of Queens* (1609) or 'honourable and true fame bred out of virtue'.[67] However, Centlivre eschews the pacific elements of Jonson's Fame who is depicted holding an olive branch in her left hand – suggestive of Centlivre's interest in producing a martial figuration of the Goddess.[68] The 'golden' trumpet of Centlivre's Fame's signifies her virtue, associated with Geoffrey Chaucer's depiction in *The House of Fame* of 'Clere Laude' or 'pure praise', which is made of gold and used to spread genuine praise, in

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[64] Hone, 'Panegyric,' 117

[65] For example, Chaucer's *The House of Fame* portrays the Goddess Fame as fickle, arbitrary and unjust; see B.J. Koonce, *Chaucer and the Tradition of Fame: Symbolism in The House of Fame* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966), 44-45.

[66] See Virgil, *Aeneid*, 4.181-2.

[67] *Ben Jonson: The Complete Masques*, ed. Stephen Orgel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), 122. Subsequent references in the text are by line number.

[68] See Jonson, *Complete Masques*, 423-7.

contrast to its partner, 'Sklaundre', a black trumpet made of brass and used to spread infamy or shame.[69] Furthering the association of 'good Fame' with gold, the virtue signified by this precious metal is further accentuated by Centlivre's image of Fame's flowing golden hair: 'her Golden Tresses by the Wind were born' (p.57). Like Virgil's monumental figure whose head reaches the clouds,[70] Centlivre describes a towering Goddess whose 'Head aspir'd to reach a distant Sky', thus evoking a powerful female presence who dominates and almost fills the silvan landscape, serving as a counterpoint to Pope's rendering of Anne as the guardian who 'protects the Sylvan Reign' (163).[71]

Whilst in Pope's *Windsor-Forest*, Anne through her divine proclamation of peace had been the agent of Thames' and Augusta's awakening, in Centlivre's poem, the goddess Fame rouses the two deities by blowing the 'golden' trumpet of Fame:

> Straight with her Breath she blew a gladsome Sound,
> And Eccho joyfully the notes rebound.
> *Augusta* heard, and rais'd her awful Head,
> While *Thamatis* forsook his owzy Bed:
> To welcome *Fame* they both apear'd in View,
> And from her Looks propitious Omens drew. (p.57)

The rousing sound of Fame's trumpet, which 'Eccho joyfully the notes rebound', is suggestive of a call to action. As we have seen in my discussion of Egerton's panegyrics, the echo is a key motif of Whig heroic verse, which celebrates military glory as a resounding echo of triumph and fame. The rebounding notes of Fame's golden trumpet are a rallying cry for continued military action, which will later be made explicit in Fame's extended address. Both Thames and Augusta respond to Fame's clarion call; the 'propitious Omens' they draw from Fame capture the Whiggish hopes and aspiration for prolonging the war. While Pope's edenic green landscape is emblematic of the 'Peace and Plenty' (42) of Anne Stuart's reign after the perceived desolation of William's era, Centlivre's idyllic silvan scene where 'Nature [is] renew'd', dominated by a militant female deity of power and glory, symbolizes the resurgence of Whiggish hopes that Eugene's arrival will effect a continuation of the war. Fame's concern with military action is made explicit by the extended speech given by the

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[69] Geoffrey Chaucer*, The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson, 3rd. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 367.
[70] See Virgil, *Aeneid*, 4.176.
[71] For the depictions of Anne and the Goddess Diana as guardians of the sylvan domain in *Windsor-Forest*, see Audra and Williams, introduction, 140.

Goddess upon Thames' and Augusta's awakening. Indeed, both Pope's and Centlivre's poems feature an extended monologue extolling the virtues of peace and war respectively. In Pope's *Windsor-Forest*, Father Thames arises to give his famous address on the virtues of peace: 'Hail Sacred *Peace*! hail long-expected Days,/ Which *Thames*'s Glory to the Stars shall raise! (355-6). Centlivre's version, however, inverts the gender of the speaker; in her poem, the speech is not made by the male figure of Thames but by the female deity, Fame. The Goddess adopts a militant stance, urging Thames and Augusta to welcome Eugene in the manner of military battalions displaying their battle flags: 'Hail old *Thame*, *Augusta* now rejoice,/ Great *Eugene* comes, your Banners straight display' (p.57). Centlivre refashions the role of Pope's articulate visionary of the Peace, minimizing the figure of Thames to a passive, albeit supportive spectator. Thames' monologue is instead endowed on the powerful female vision of the Goddess Fame: Centlivre's mythic representation of glory, renown and war.

A significant part of Pope's Father Thames' monologue focuses on condemning the violence and losses of war – 'No more my Sons shall dye with *British* Blood/ Red *Iber*'s Sands, or *Ister*'s foaming Flood' (367-8) – unequivocally repudiating the notion of warfare in favour of that of peace. By contrast, Centlivre's Fame makes clear that war is her central concern; she grants the gifts of glory and renown on the two Whiggish heroes of the continental war, valorising and lauding both Eugene, and his 'Brother […] of the War' (p.57), the Duke of Marlborough. The able-bodied 'Youth' of Britain are urged to welcome Eugene, 'this *God* of *War*', and profit from his heroic example:

> *Eugene* and *Marlbro,* Names to *Europe* Dear,
> True *Heroes* born, and Brothers of the War,
> Their innate Worth immortal Life shall give,
> And make their Fame in spight of Envy, Live,
>
> […] Haste, *Britons*, haste, your choicest Youth prepare
> To meet and entertain this *God* of *War*;
> From *him*, and *Marlbro*, let your Soldiers take
> Such bright Example as true *Heroes* make.
> Be brave like *them* discharge their Trust,
> To *ANNE* be Loyal, to their Country Just;
> So shall their *Acts* strike Envy's Censure dumb,
> And thus *Britannia* Rival Ancient *Rome.* (p.57)

The eulogy to Marlborough, the Whig hero, recently humiliated and removed from office, underscores the partisan priorities of Centlivre's poem; the two references to 'Envy' allude to the bitter politicking and malice which brought down the Duke just months before the poem was published. After the extended tributes to Eugene and Marlborough, the reference to Queen Anne seems brief and an afterthought. For most of the poem, the role of Anne is occluded by the dominant female presence of the Goddess Fame, as well as the two heroes: Eugene and Marlborough. In the next verse paragraph, the scene changes again from a silvan retreat to a vision of the royal court: 'And *ANNA*'s Court appear'd, to welcome *Great Eugene*/ Foremost in *Worth*, did Graceful *Marlbro' stand*' (p.58). Again the Queen is a shadowy presence even at her own court, while the scene focuses on the pair of Whig heroes: 'Graceful *Marlbro*', whose '*Fame* shall glitter like a Star' (p.58), and '*Great Eugene*', the 'valiant *Prince*' (p.58). Centlivre's tribute can even be interpreted as an implicit dismissal of the Tory Anne when she audaciously lauds Eugene over crowned monarchs – '*Hail* valiant *Prince*, far more than *Monarch* blest;/ He wants no *Crown*, who reigns in ev'ry Breast' (p.58) – a sentiment which could also refer to Marlborough, who was created a prince of the Holy Roman Empire and of the Bavarian territory of Mindelheim.[72] Centlivre makes explicit the overriding objective of her poem in relation to the peace when the mythical figure of the 'Genius of our Isle' (p.58) addresses Eugene and Marlborough directly, urging them to continue military action on the Continent to its 'crushing' completion: 'Go one *Brave Pair*, subdue/ The *Tyrant* only can be crush'd by *you*' (p.58).

The poem's valorisation of Marlborough recalls other Whiggish poems on the peace, including Tickell's *On the Prospect of Peace*, a work which is 'as much a consolidation of the Whig mythologization of the war as it is a celebration of the peace'.[73] Unlike Pope's repudiation of the victories of the continental war as a contributory factor of the peace, Tickell underscores the Whiggish argument that peace was only achieved as a consequence of the war and its triumphs.[74] Tickell's poem memorializes Marlborough's military heroism, recalling the general's triumphs at

[72] See Peter Barber, 'Marlborough as Imperial Prince 1704-1717,' *British Library Journal* 8, no. 1 (Spring 1982): 45-80.
[73] Williams, *Literary Culture*, 164.
[74] Ibid., 165.

Blenheim in crushing the Gallic forces on the banks of the river Danube:

> Here fled the *Houshold*, there did *Tallard* yield,
> Here *Marlborough* turn'd the Fortune of the Field,
> On those steep Banks, near *Danube*'s raging Flood
> The *Gauls* thrice started back, and trembling stood,
> When, *Churchill's* Arm perceiv'd, they stood not long,
> But plung'd amidst the Waves, a desp'rate Throng,
> Crowds whelm'd on Crowds dash'd wide the watry Bed,
> And drove the Current to its distant Head.[75]

Tickell's poem employs the sublime register and martial idiom we have observed in Whig heroic poetry. Marlborough assumes the elemental power of the '*Danube*'s raging Flood', emerging as a powerful almost sublime force of nature which 'dash'd' the desperate French forces against the furious 'Current' and 'watry Bed'. Although Centlivre's verse similarly honours and eulogizes the Duke, she displays the customary feminine disdain for graphic scenes of military violence. As did Trotter's war panegyrics, Centlivre's poem eschews the glorification of martial violence to privilege Marlborough's moral virtues: his *'Worth*', his 'Loyalty and Courage', his 'Truth, and Prudence' (p.58):

> Foremost in *Worth*, did Graceful *Marlbro'* stand,
> Whose *Wondrous Conduct* sav'd the *British* Land,
> And *Europe's Balance* fix'd in *ANNA's* Hand.
> Spight of his *Foes*, he's still to *Eugene* dear
> Who knows his Soul, knows ev'ry Virtue there.
> Knows Loyalty and Courage fill his Breast,
> And sees his Mind, with Truth, and Prudence drest. (p.58)

Tickell's poem, published after the conclusion of the Tory peace became inevitable, displays a somewhat diplomatic stance: his verse is careful to laud Anne and praise the Tory ministers and military leaders of the time, including Robert Harley, Lord Granville (a Tory secretary of war), General Webb and the Duke of Ormonde.[76] However, Centlivre's poem, published when the Whigs still held hopes for a continuation of the war, is unabashedly partisan, focusing exclusively on the figures of Marlborough and Eugene as the pair of Whiggish heroes of the continental war, with the looming presence of William, the architect of the war, in the background. The Queen is included

[75] Thomas Tickell, *On the Prospect of Peace*, in *Eighteenth-Century Poetry Archive (Eighteenth-Century Poetry Archive, 2018),* lines 75-82, accessed May 10, 2018, http://www.eighteenthcenturypoetry.org/works/o5152-w0010.shtml.
[76] See Tickell, *Prospect of Peace*, lines 214, 218, 346, 398.

almost as an afterthought, and in lauding Eugene and Marlborough as the only leaders who can defeat the Gallic enemy, Centlivre completely dismisses the role of the Tory Ormonde, Marlborough's replacement as Captain-General of the British army. Centlivre's poem ends with a distinctly Whiggish prophetic vision of the peace:

> Tho' freed from *Marlbro'*, still [Louis'] *Fears* remain,
> Still *Anjou* trembles on the *Throne* of *Spain*;
> And if I ought foresee, the *Bourbon Race*
> Shall (forc'd by thee) to *Austria's House* give place. (pp.58-59)

This can be compared with Pope's famous augury of the peace, which evokes the trade and prosperity and international brotherhood that concord is expected to bring: 'Unbounded *Thames* shall flow for all Mankind,/ Whole Nations enter with each swelling Tyde' (398-9). By contrast, Centlivre concludes with a Whiggish priority of the war that played out, as we have seen, in the parliamentary struggles over the motion, 'No Peace Without Spain'. Centlivre foretells a future in which Eugene and the Grand Alliance will successfully force the French king to abandon his efforts to maintain the Bourbon Philip on the throne of Spain, giving place to the Austrian House of Hapsburg instead. This prophecy was not to be fulfilled since the Treaty of Utrecht entered into by the Tory government a year later permitted this grandson of Louis XIV to maintain the Spanish throne, although Philip was compelled to renounce his rights to the succession of France.[77]

Centlivre was an active player in the propaganda war that accompanied the negotiations for peace, and made valuable, overlooked contributions to the debate on the Tory Peace. More than a year before the conclusion of the Treaty of Utrecht, she capitalized on a visit by Eugene of Savoy to urge a continuation of the war; less than two months after Marlborough's public disgrace and dismissal, she defiantly paid tribute to this Whiggish saviour. Centlivre's highly partisan verse is less diplomatic than that of her male Whig contemporaries; indeed, the negative impact of her publicly partisan stance on the production of her *The Perplex'd Lovers* compelled her to articulate an even more extended vision of her bold Whiggish views in this poem published with the printed version of

[77] See Fredrik Dhondt, *Balance of Power and Norm Hierarchy: Franco-British Diplomacy after the Peace of Utrecht* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2015), 315.

the play. Through a comparison of Centlivre's poem with other panegyrics, Tory and Whig, Restoration and contemporary, we can see much more clearly that Whiggism adapts and refashions the symbolic idiom of Royalist Stuart literature in order to achieve specifically Whiggish ends. Alongside the dominant Whiggish drive to reform the native poetic tradition as espoused by Joseph Addison, there was also a partisan battle over poetic tropes and conceits long associated with Stuart literary culture. As did her Whig compatriots, John Hughes and Elizabeth Singer Rowe, Centlivre entered into this ideological and discursive contest, borrowing and manipulating traditional Stuart iconography, including that employed by Pope's contemporary Tory production, in order to grant authority and legitimacy to her political agenda. Attention to Centlivre's neglected poetic address to Eugene sheds revealing light on the Tory–Whig exchange surrounding the production of Pope's famous paean to the peace, and highlights Centlivre's place within the dynamic contemporary dialogue on the relations between partisan politics, poetic form and gender.

**Susanna Centlivre and the Protestant Hanoverian Succession**

> To GEORGE of *Wales* I Dedicated,
> Tho' then at Court I knew him Hated.
> *Steele* was then in Reputation
> With all true Lovers of my Nation:
> Yet spight of *Steele's* Advice I did it;
> Nay tho' my Husband's Place forbid it;
> For he these Forty Years has been
> The Servant to a King or Queen:
> Nor will I here the Truth dissemble,
> This Action made his Post to Tremble;
> And he had surely been turn'd out,
> Had not good Fortune wheel'd about.[78]

This verse paragraph from Centlivre's autobiographical poem, *A Woman's Case* (1720), alludes to her staunch and possibly premature support for the Hanoverian dynasty, articulated even while Anne still reigned on the throne. Centlivre describes how she dedicated the published version of *The Wonder* (1714) to George Augustus, the then Duke of Cambridge (and future George II), in May 1714, against the advice of her friend, Richard Steele, and despite the significant risk to the position

[78] Centlivre, *A Woman's Case,* 2.

of her husband, Joseph Centlivre, in the Queen's domestic household. Her reference to Steele's 'Reputation' gestures to his position as the Whigs' primary spokesperson in the ongoing propaganda war of the time, and emphasizes Centlivre's zeal in undertaking an action deemed too risky even for the leading Whig polemicist.[79] What made Centlivre's dedication particularly *risqué* was its timing to coincide with the raging political controversy of the 'Writ Demand', during which the Whigs were manoeuvring for the Duke of Cambridge to be invited to take up his seat in the House of Lords against the express desire of Queen Anne. Anxious to secure the Protestant Hanoverian succession during the succession crisis of 1713-14, which arose from the Queen's protracted ill-health and serious concerns about the Harley government's wavering commitment to the Hanoverian dynasty, the Whigs attempted to have a writ of summons to the Duke of Cambridge issued by parliament.[80] Their efforts floundered, however, in the face of Anne's implacable opposition to any member of the Electoral family taking up residence in Britain during her lifetime. Displaying her customary Whiggish zeal, Centlivre entered the fray during this politically contentious time. Her dedication to George Augustus publicly signals her support for the Whiggish and Hanoverian position in direct opposition to the Queen's wishes on the issue. Centlivre describes her 'utmost Impatience' for the Prince's visit, drawing upon the language of commerce and credit (that we have seen used in her drama) to depict the intended visit as an event that would lift the nation's 'PUBLICK CREDIT':

> This dedication which I always intended to Address to your HIGHNESS, and which I was in hopes might have Congratulated you upon your being in England, must now wait for your Arrival. I am sure I speak the Sense of every honest Briton, when I say that we expect it with the utmost Impatience.
>
> Your Highness, who has been hitherto a Stranger among us, cannot easily conceive the Confidence we repose in you; and it will, perhaps, hardly be believ'd in future Ages, that the first Report of the Duke of Cambridge's Design to Visit us, should raise the PUBLICK CREDIT of the British Nation.[81]

Third-party accounts testify to the gamble that Centlivre was taking. Her eighteenth-century

[79] After Arthur Maynwaring's death in 1712, Steele was at the forefront of the partisan paper war as 'unofficial director of Whig propaganda, gathering together a journalistic tribe' and producing anti-Tory pamphlets, including *The Crisis* (1714). See Bloom and Bloom, introduction, 4.

[80] For a fuller consideration of the 'Writ Demand' controversy, see Gregg, *Queen Anne*, 377-87.

[81] Susanna Centlivre, dedication of *The Wonder* (London, 1714).

biographer, John Mottley, describes the risk that Centlivre took in dedicating the play 'to his present Majesty, then Duke of *Cambridge*, and at *Hanover*, just at the Time when a Writ had been demanded, but refused, to call him to his Seat in the House of Peers in *England*'.[82] Commentary on the controversy in the Whiggish journal, *The Patriot*, suggests that Centlivre's actions were well known in literary and possibly political circles: Centlivre was lauded for the risks she took in publishing '[t]he Dedication of her Play to His Royal Highness, when Duke of Cambridge in May last, a time in which it was esteem'd almost a Crime to name that Family'.[83] Centlivre's actions appeared to have had the backing of Whig politicians too. The dedication of Centlivre's play, *The Gotham Election*, to the Whig statesman, James Cragg, alludes to Cragg's support during the controversy: 'YOU who so generously espous'd my Interest when you knew my Intention of dedicating to His Royal Highness, then Duke of *Cambridge*'.[84]

Although Centlivre's husband's position of 'Forty Years' in the royal household was jeopardized by her outspokenness, the Centlivres were saved by a fortuitous transference of power. In *A Woman's Case*, Centlivre's audacious reference to 'good Fortune' pointed to Anne's death in August 1714, which established the Hanoverian Elector on the British throne within months of her risky dedication. Indeed, the Queen's death brought about a vast turnaround in the Whigs' fortunes, which were at an ebb during what Centlivre described as 'those Four Black Years' of 1710-14.[85]

**The death of Anne and the Hanoverian accession**

The bitter partisan struggles in the last four years of Anne's reign came to the fore with the death of the Queen on 1 August 1714. The years 1712-14 following the fall of Marlborough and the conclusion of peace had witnessed internal Tory party conflicts in the intense rivalry between Robert Harley and Henry St John, who were locked in a bitter and ultimately futile power struggle. The Queen dismissed Harley in July 1714, leaving St John briefly in power; however, the Queen's deathbed choice of the moderate Duke of Shrewsbury as Lord Treasurer over the Jacobite St John,

[82] Mottley, *Dramatic Poets*, 190.
[83] *Patriot* (January 17, 1715).
[84] Centlivre, dedication of *Gotham Election.*
[85] Centlivre, 'Earl of Halifax'.

stymied the latter's ambitions and effectively secured the Protestant Hanoverian succession. The Whig journalist, Abel Boyer, lauds Shrewsbury's appointment as a 'deliverance wrought by the Hand of the Almighty'.[86] Boyer explains how Whiggish hopes for a Hanoverian succession were secured by Shrewsbury's appointment:

> His Grace's Promotion to the Post of Lord Treasurer […] immediately changed the Face of Affairs; dash'd the towring Ambitions of the Ld. *Bolingbroke*; baffled his sinister, undigested Schemes; alarm'd the Friends of the *Pretender*; and wonderfully reviv'd the Drooping Spirits of the Well-Affected to the *Hanoverian* Succession. (8:631)

The moderate Shrewsbury paved the way for a Hanoverian succession: pre-empting a possible Jacobite uprising, he secured the necessary military fortifications in London and throughout maritime towns and in Scotland and Ireland, to ensure a peaceful and orderly transition of power.[87] The Elector of Hanover arrived in London in September 1714 and was crowned on 20 October 1714, in an atmosphere described by Boyer as '[of] such tranquillity as scarce can be believ'd but by them who were Eye-Witnesses of that *memorable Event*' (8:119). That George I received non-partisan parliamentary support, at least at the time of his accession, is evident when the then overwhelmingly Tory-dominated parliament unanimously proclaimed the King's 'undoubted right to the imperial crown of this realm, against the Pretender, and all other persons whatsoever'.[88] Indeed, it was not only the Whigs who supported the Hanoverian succession; a number of Tories, including the 'Hanoverian Tories' or 'Whimsicals', preferred the Protestant Hanoverians to the return of Catholicism which their rivals, the exiled Stuarts, would have brought.[89] Nevertheless, Boyer's account of the absolute 'tranquillity' which surrounded George's coronation belies the existence of material Jacobite sentiment in various parts of the country, as manifested in the 'coronation riots' of 1714 which broke out in over twenty towns including Oxford, Reading, Birmingham and Chichester.[90] Writing a year after the Hanoverian accession, Daniel Defoe condemned the 'dangerous Practice of

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[86] Abel Boyer, *The political state of Great Britain* (London, 1718-20), 8:631. Subsequent references are to this edition.
[87] Boyer, *political state*, 8:632.
[88] See Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, 7:6.
[89] See Gregg, *Queen Anne*, 377.
[90] See Margaret Sankey, *Jacobite Prisoners of the 1715 Rebellion: Preventing and Punishing Insurrection in Early Hanoverian Britain* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), chap. 1.

Mobs and Riots […by a] rude and lawless Multitude', urging the authorities to take severe action against offenders of 'the Jacobite Party', whose actions he compared to 'the Struggling of a Dying Man in his last Convulsions'.[91]

Notwithstanding the Jacobite sentiment evident in parts of the country, the accession of George I was celebrated in a number of poetic tributes by writers eager to affirm the Protestant Hanoverian succession, as well as welcome and seek the favour of the new regime. According to the listings in David Foxon's catalogue, fifty-two panegyrics were published on the arrival and installation of George I in 1714, more than twice as many as the number of laudatory poems produced on the accession of Anne in 1702.[92] The outpouring of tributes to the first Georgian monarch was linked to an overall sense of relief and satisfaction about the Protestant accession, after prolonged concerns about the royal succession dating from the death of the young Duke of Gloucester in 1700 and culminating in the succession crisis of 1713-14. Nevertheless, the proliferation of poetic praise and justifications also betrays a sense of unease and insecurity given the relatively fragile political situation, as manifested in the coronation riots of 1714, and which would later deteriorate into the Jacobite Rebellion of 1715 or the 'Fifteen'. Indeed, the articulation of sovereignty and assent was crucial at the point of accession, given the momentous change heralded by the ascent of an entirely new foreign dynasty, whose authority and legitimacy were challenged by the existence of a competing king across the sea: James Francis Edward Stuart.

Unsurprisingly, given her early devotion to the Hanoverian cause, Susanna Centlivre was one of the most vocal of Hanoverian loyalists – publishing a number of royal panegyrics including three laudatory poems to the Hanoverian royals between 1714 and 1715 – and eulogizing the new king and his heir in verse addresses to Charles Montagu in 1714 and to the King of Sweden in 1717.[93] Centlivre was rewarded for her resolute support for the Hanoverian dynasty through command royal

[91] Daniel Defoe, *An Account of the Riots, Tumults, and Other Treasonable Practices* [etc] (London, 1715), 1, 6.
[92] See Foxon, *English Verse*, 2:246, 2:219.
[93] Susanna Centlivre, *A Poem. Humbly presented to His most Sacred Majesty George, King of Great Britain, France and Ireland* [etc] (London, 1714); Susanna Centlivre, *An Epistle to Mrs. Wallup* [etc] (London, 1714); Susanna Centlivre, 'To Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales. At her Toylet, on New-Year's Day,' *Patriot*, (January 15-18, 1715); Centlivre, 'Earl of Halifax'; Susanna Centlivre, *An Epistle to the King of Sweden* [etc] (London, 1717). All subsequent references to the abovementioned poems are to these editions.

performances of her plays, which included productions for the author's benefit, and gifts from the royal family.[94]

Despite the proliferation of laudatory verse at George I's accession, however, the impact of the early Hanoverians on literary culture has received little critical attention. Notable exceptions include Hannah Smith's historical study on the cultural politics of early Georgian monarchy, and Christine Gerrard's critique of poetry and politics in the Walpole era.[95] My reading is indebted to these scholarly works; but whilst Gerrard's study is concerned with the writings of the dissident, 'Patriot' Whigs and their vocal opposition to Robert Walpole between 1725-1742, my thesis focuses on literature of a specific historical moment: the image-making and poetic representations of George I and the royal family during and immediately after the Hanoverian accession of 1714. This focus on the neglected succession literature of George I's reign sheds revealing light on the evolution of Whig verse in the early years of the Hanoverian era, when the Whigs were still a largely united political force intent on affirming the Hanoverian accession against the Jacobite threat, and articulating Britain's commercial and imperial ambitions following the onset of peace. My reading focuses primarily on Centlivre's contributions to the iconography of a new Protestant kingship in relation to the works of her male contemporaries. As the laudatory verse of the Hanoverian accession has been relatively unexplored, I examine a broad range of verse addresses by Whig panegyrists – including Thomas Tickell, Nicholas Rowe, Samuel Croxall, John Dennis, Ambrose Philips, and Leonard Welsted – in order to establish a framework for the poetic image-making of the Hanoverian dynasty.

## Celebrating the Hanoverian accession

The accession of George Ludwig, the Elector of Hanover, to the throne as George I of Great Britain and Ireland posed problems, as well as advantages to panegyrists seeking to create an effective and authoritative imagery of kingship for a new dynasty. As we have seen, Anne had proved problematic for Whig literary practitioners, many of whom shifted their attentions to the figure

[94] For more details, see pp.61-62.

[95] Hannah Smith, *Georgian Monarchy: Politics and Culture, 1714-1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); and Gerrard, *Patriot Opposition*. See too Abigail Williams, 'Literature and the Hanoverian succession, c.1700-c.1730,' in *ODNB* (Oxford University Press, 2004), accessed June 25, 2017, https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/107093.

of the Duke of Marlborough and his dazzling martial feats on the continent. By contrast, as male princes and soldiers with commendable military histories, George Ludwig and his heir apparent, George Augustus, were much more easily appropriated to the model of a heroic, martial kingship last celebrated in the figure of William III.[96] Furthermore, unlike William's dramatic assumption of the throne through the displacement and exile of James II, which necessitated a variety of skilful defences from Whig apologists, George I's succession was a predictable event, long settled constitutionally through the Act of Settlement of 1701, which was designed to secure the Protestant succession through the Electress Sophia and her heirs.[97]

In other ways, however, the Hanoverians proved an unpromising fabric with which to conceive a British royal imagery and myth. George I was of course a foreigner, a German prince who had never resided in Britain prior to his accession and had little facility with the English language. Whilst the other recent foreign successor to the throne, William III, was married to Mary Stuart, whose status as the eldest daughter of James II did much to buttress the legitimacy of William and Mary's joint monarchy, George's wife was a German princess, Sophia Dorothea of Celle, who was divorced from him due to her scandalous adulterous liaison. By strict hereditary right, the Hanoverian Elector had a remote claim to the throne: when the Act of Settlement was drawn in 1701, there were famously more than over fifty (Catholic) claimants with a superior hereditary right to the British crown.[98] The Hanoverians also had to compete with the romantic image of their exiled rivals across the channel – the Pretender, James Francis Edward Stuart, and his son, Charles Edward Stuart – 'direct descendant[s] in the male line of the Stuart kings who had ruled Scotland since 1371 and England and Ireland since 1603'.[99]

Susanna Centlivre and her literary compatriots navigated the problems and advantages associated with the Hanoverian dynasty in a variety of rhetorical ways, in their efforts to fashion a compelling image of Georgian monarchism, while underscoring their Whiggish priorities. In a

[96] Williams, 'Hanoverian,' 3.
[97] Ibid.
[98] See G.C. Gibbs, 'George I (1660-1727),' in *ODNB* (Oxford University Press, 2004), accessed July 3, 2017, https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:4563/10.1093/ref:odnb/10538.
[99] Smith, *Georgian Monarchy*, 3.

panegyric to George I – *A Poem. Humbly presented to His most Sacred Majesty George, King of Great Britain, France and Ireland* (1714) – Centlivre displays her familiar penchant for classical models, employing a classical analogy to both accentuate George's regal authority, as well as mitigate his status as a foreigner. Drawing parallels between the 'Cruel *Faction*' of ancient Rome and the bitter partisan battles in Britain of recent years, Centlivre evokes George I in the image of the Roman emperor Trajan:

> So Cruel *Faction* tore *Rome's* ancient State,
> And all her Glories seem'd the Sport of Fate;
> When by Adoption *Trajan* took the Reins,
> And check'd his People's Heats, and quench'd the Flames;
> Enlarg'd her Bounds to distant *India*'s Shoar,
> And taught her Drooping Eagles how to soar.
>
> YOU Sir, like him, the British Throne ascend;
> May equal Victories you Reign attend.
> When round the Continent the Trump of Fame
> Did *Britain*'s Glory in your Right proclaim,
> Tyrannick Monarchs, as with Thunder fear'd,
> Sent up their Prayers impending Fates to ward;
> [….]
>
> By your fam'd Justice, and your prudent Sway,
> *France* shall be taught to Love, or to Obey;
> Whilst You the Right of Liberty assert,
> And all the Ills of broken Faith avert;
> To *Barcelona* may Your Succours fly,
> Before her Champions 'midst her Ruins dye. (pp.6-7)

Centlivre's invocation of Trajan attests to the continuing vitality of classical models in the early Hanoverian era, configured in this case to accommodate a specific exigency. In the figure of Trajan or Marcus Ulpius Traianus (53-117 AD), the first Roman emperor to have been born outside of Italy, Centlivre underscores the impressive historical success achieved by an adopted foreign leader.[100] Like George Ludwig of Hanover, the foreigner and outsider 'adopted' by Britain to ascend its throne, Trajan, who was born in the Roman Province of Hispania (Spain), was adopted by the childless emperor, Nerva. Trajan went on to become a pre-eminent emperor of Rome who enlarged its imperial boundaries to its largest extent at that time. In her prophetic phrase – 'May equal Victories

[100] Survir Kaul notes Centlivre's use of Trajan as a model for an outsider king and her glorification of British imperialism, but neglects the work's specific and immediately historical Whiggish elements; Suvir Kaul, 'Poetry, Politics, and Empire,' in Gerrard, *Eighteenth-Century Poetry*, 23-25.

your Reign attend' – Centlivre elevates George to the prestige and glory of imperial Rome, while underlining her own Whiggish ambitions for the Hanoverian reign. As Joseph Hone explains, 'as a future-directed genre, panegyric often contains a prophetic strain, anticipating future glories but this prophesied future is usually subject to a politically – and morally – conditioned present'.[101] The new Hanoverian regime will revive Britain's prestige perceived as eroded under the rule of Anne and the Tories, and George will teach, as Trajan did, 'her Drooping Eagles how to soar'. Alluding to the bitter partisanship of recent years, George will effect harmony amongst the people and quell faction and rebellion, as Trajan 'check'd his People's Heats, and quench'd the Flames'. Centlivre also paints an ambitious vision of Britain's martial and imperial prospects: Britain will exert its dominance over the European continent – 'When round the Continent the Trump of Fame/ Did *Britain*'s Glory in your Right proclaim' – and like imperial Rome, extend its influence beyond the borders of Europe 'to distant *India's* Shoar'.

In lauding the King, Centlivre displays the customary panegyrical vein of 'counsel through praise', as she subtly lays down the grounds upon which she acclaims the sovereignty of the new dynasty, in effect on Whiggish terms and ambitions. A central concern for the Whigs at the beginning of the Hanoverian reign was to return Britain to a state of military greatness and international repute after the controversial Treaty of Utrecht, when it was felt that Britain had squandered a golden opportunity to ensure the total defeat of enemy France. (George of Hanover, as one of the members of the Grand Alliance abandoned in the field by Britain's and France's bilateral agreement, was known to have deplored the Treaty.)[102] Couched in Centlivre's praise is the expectation that George will reassert Britain's dominance over France – '*France* shall be taught to Love, or to Obey' – and alleviate Whiggish disappointment about the Tory Peace and its abandonment of British allies: 'Whilst You the Right of Liberty assert,/ And all the Ills of broken Faith avert'. Engaging with immediate political developments, Centlivre urges the King to ameliorate the past indignity of 'broken Faith' by providing military and political aid to '*Barcelona*' and its 'Champions'. Catalonia was

[101] Hone, 'Politicising Praise,' 150.
[102] See Ragnhild Hatton, *George I* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2001), 105-6.

Britain's ally who supported the Allied cause during the continental war; however in direct contravention of the clauses of the Treaty of Utrecht, its capital city, Barcelona, was besieged and occupied by Franco-Spanish forces in September 1714, just a month before Centlivre's poem was published.[103]

Centlivre makes explicit the Whiggish underpinnings of her tribute when the King is hailed as the 'Adopted Son' of another foreigner king: 'Glorious *WILLIAM'* (p.7). George's arrival in Britain is celebrated through the familiar 'return and celebration' tropes:

> The swelling Waves which often heretofore
> Our yet lov'd King, the Glorious *WILLIAM*, bore,
> Proud in conveying his Adopted Son,
> Part with Regret, and murmur as they run. (p.7)

As we have seen, Eugene of Savoy was praised by Centlivre in a similar fashion as the military heir to William in her assertion of the merits of continuing the war on the continent. William stands as a Whiggish template of the model leader, both military and political, and in lauding George I in the image of this Whiggish kingly ideal, Centlivre configures the new Hanoverian reign as a continuation of the political, continental and military policies implemented by William. The invocation of William asserts the legitimacy and authority of the Hanoverian dynasty on terms calculated to appeal not only to a Whiggish audience but to all those who support a Protestant succession. As William's 'Adopted Son', George's accession fulfils William's ambitions to safeguard the Protestant succession, as designed by the Act of Settlement of 1701, and as heirs to 'Glorious *WILLIAM'*, the Hanoverians signal a return to the Whig values and policies of William's reign.

But while George is acclaimed as William's political heir, Caroline of Ansbach, the Princess of Wales, was also appropriated into a Whiggish genealogy of royal inheritance. George I's image was compromised by his publicly disgraced, adulterous former wife (the scandal was a popular target for Jacobite propaganda).[104] However, his daughter-in-law Caroline, wife of George Augustus, proved a suitably laudable and regal figure, who filled the conventional supportive role of a royal consort to bolster and legitimize the monarchy. As Hannah Smith asserts, 'from the time of [Caroline's] arrival

[103] See Trevelyan, *England*, 3:227-8.
[104] The scandal was fanned by Jacobites right up to Sophia Dorothea's death in 1726; Pittock, *Jacobite*, 61.

in England in 1714, she enjoyed a popularity which even her detractors found difficult to assail and which was crucial to the establishment of the dynasty in Britain'.[105] This was due in part to the princess' fecundity (in contrast to the relatively unproductive Stuarts), a crucial factor which offered the promise of an enduring royal line of succession.[106] At the time of the Hanoverian accession in 1714, Caroline had already borne four healthy children, and she and the Prince of Wales would go on to have seven offspring who survived to adulthood. Caroline also upheld the image of a devout Protestant princess, which facilitated her queenly role as guardian of Britain's established faith.[107] Caroline's reputation of fervent Protestantism was reinforced by an incident from her youth that became legendary for her supporters: in 1703-4, the princess spurned the most prestigious of royal marriages – that to the Catholic Archduke Charles of Austria, a future Holy Roman Emperor and candidate for king of Spain – due to her refusal to renounce Lutheranism for Catholicism.[108]

Centlivre's engagement with the Princess of Wales is evident in her panegyrics: *An Epistle to Mrs. Wallup* (1714), and 'To Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales' (1715). The former belongs to the genre of the Whig verse epistle, which had flourished in the early Hanoverian era, as exemplified by Leonard Welsted's *An Epistle to Mr Steele* (1714), and Ambrose Philips' *An Epistle to the Honourable James Cragg, Esq* (1717). These epistolary poems are addressed to prominent male Whig figures and articulate a homosocial bond of shared partisan loyalties; through underscoring the friendship between poet and addressee, they not only express the author's political commitments but evoke an idealized community with shared ideological values.[109] Centlivre employs this popular poetic form, refashioned from a gendered perspective. The addressee of Centlivre's poem was a female Whig aristocrat, Lady Bridget Wallop, who was in attendance to the Princess of Wales during her journey to England from The Hague. Wallop was a grandee of impeccable Whig credentials. She was married to the Whig politician, John Wallop (appointed lord of the Treasury in

[105] Smith, *Georgian Monarchy*, 33.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid.
[108] See W.H. Wilkins, *Caroline the Illustrious Queen Consort of George II and Sometimes Queen-Regent: A Study of Her Life and Time* (London: Longmans, Green, 1901), 22.
[109] Williams, *Literary Culture*, 118. For a study of the genre, see William C. Dowling, *The Epistolary Moment: The Poetics of the Eighteenth-Century Verse Epistle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

1717 and later ennobled as the Earl of Portsmouth), and was also the granddaughter of Ford Grey, the Earl of Tankerville, who was implicated as one of the conspirators of the Rye House Plot of 1683, along with the Whig martyrs, Lord William Russell and Algernon Sydney.[110] Centlivre's address to Bridget Wallop signals an attempt to create a sociable female network of Hanoverian supporters. Centlivre pays tribute to Wallop for her 'ardent' support for George I and the Hanoverian royal family, a zeal of course shared by Centlivre herself:

> This *Madam*, we may write, but who can tell
> What mighty Transport in your Bosom dwell,
> To see the *Scepter* by that *Hero* sway'd,
> To whom long since your ardent Vows were paid.
> When your unweary'd Zeal thrice crost the Sea,
> Nor fear'd what Dangers might obstruct your Way. (p.6)

Centlivre praises the Whig aristocrat for the dangers she has hazarded in upholding the Hanoverian dynasty, drawing attention to a shared political commitment, in view of the professional risks Centlivre herself had taken in support of the Hanoverian cause. She also pointedly refers to the issue of patronage in her expressed hopes for Lady Wallop's royal preferment – 'may the *Princess* you so oft has praised […] Give you that Preference due to your Desert' (p.6) – an allusion perhaps to Centlivre's own ambitions for literary patronage from political and court sources, possibly from Lady Wallop herself. As a *habitué* of royal and political circles, Bridget Wallop was well placed to provide patronage to a writer like Centlivre who shared a similar political outlook.

This line of female identification continues in Centlivre's tribute to the Princess of Wales whom she lauds in the image of a Whiggish royal heroine, Mary II:

> *Britannia*'s Court shall in full Lustre shine,
> As heretofore in Bright *Maria*'s time:
> *Maria*'s Name still sounds in *British* Ears,
> Like Musick tun'd from the Celestial Spheres.
> […] The Sun which set in fair *Maria*'s Eyes,
> In *Carolina*'s does triumphant rise,
> In *her* you'll find *Maria*'s Loss retriev'd,
> That Charming *Queen* for whom so much we griev'd. (p.7)

[110] See John Martin, 'Wallop, John, first earl of Portsmouth (1690-1762),' in *ODNB* (Oxford University Press, 2004), accessed September 25, 2017, https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:4563/10.1093/ref:odnb/28582; and Richard L. Greaves, 'Grey, Ford, earl of Tankerville (*bap.* 1655, *d.* 1701),' in *ODNB* (Oxford University Press, 2004), accessed September 25, 2017, https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:4563/10.1093/ref:odnb/11531.

In a clear slight to the Tory Anne, Centlivre glorifies Queen Mary as the epitome of British queenship. In her imaging of Caroline as the heir to Mary II, Centlivre not only elevates the princess to the status of a queen regnant, but incorporates her into the post-Revolution Whiggish narrative of a godly Protestant queen.[111] As discussed in the chapter on the post-Revolution Whig theatre, William and Mary were configured by Whig propagandists as divinely appointed agents of moral reform and religious renewal, and Mary assumed a special position as a patron of reform and guardian of the Anglican church. Caroline, the devout Protestant princess, is the natural inheritor of her predecessor, Mary's role as the patron of moral reform. In her parallel identification of George with William, and Caroline with Mary, Centlivre fashions the Hanoverian accession as a return to the Whig values, aspirations and achievements of William and Mary's era: aggressive Protestantism, moral reformation, as well as militarism, an issue I will explore further later in this section.

Many of the themes and concerns of Centlivre's panegyrics are shared with other Whiggish succession literature. Caroline, the Princess of Wales, was lauded by male panegyrists, including a Mr Wicksted who pays tribute to the memory of Queen Mary as 'The *Carolina* of her Age'.[112] Other poets were concerned to celebrate Caroline's role as a royal progenitor who secures the line of succession. In a poem first published in *The Spectator* in 1715, Thomas Tickell extols 'Bright Carolina's' fecundity: 'A train of kings their fruitful love supplies,/ A glorious scene to Albion's ravish'd eyes'.[113] Nicholas Rowe eulogizes the Princess as the begetter of Britain's 'growing [royal] Race'.[114] He praises Caroline as a national heroine and prays for a safe impending royal delivery: 'our CAROLINE's Guard;/ Short and easy be the Pains,/ Which for a Nation's Weal the Heroine sustains' (p.34).

More commonly, however, Hanoverian panegyrics display the Whiggish poetic impulse to celebrate George I in the image of his illustrious forebear, William. Samuel Croxall acclaims George as the royal embodiment of William's kingly virtues: 'In Him they see Great WILLIAM's Virtues

[111] See Smith, *Georgian Monarchy*, 32-37.
[112] Mr. Wicksted, *An Ode for the Year MDCCXVII* [etc] (London, 1717), 13.
[113] Thomas Tickell, 'The Royal Progress,' in *The Poetical Works of Thomas Tickell* (London, 1781), 37. Subsequent references in the text are to line number.
[114] Nicholas Rowe, *An Ode for the New-Year MDCCXVI* (London, 1716), 34. Subsequent references are to this edition.

live'.[115] An anonymous poet inventively figures the German elector as a horticultural 'Graft' on William's orange (family) tree: 'Twas You, Great GEORGE, we hop'd to see,/ Rais'd as a Graft on our Fair Orange-Tree./ From Brave *Nassau*'s Illustrious Root'.[116] John Dennis honours the 'Sacred Day' of the Hanoverian accession as the culmination of all William's actions and endeavours:

> *William*'s each Action, and his ever'y Thought.
> All the long Labours of his anxious Days,
> And all the restless slumbers of his Nights,
> Were destin'd to secure this Sacred Day,
> […] For this Great *William* liv'd, and reign'd, and dy'd.[117]

In a verse epistle of 1714, Leonard Welsted underscores that George was William's 'skilful choice'; the poet hails the Hanoverian accession as a return to William's rule: 'Proclaim, ye Muses, thro' these happy plains,/ Proclaim aloud, another *Nassau* reigns'.[118] George Sewell's panegyric also pays tribute to William while directly addressing the Hanoverian monarch, emphasizing 'How much [William] lov'd Us by His Choice of You'.[119]

The mythologization of George I as a second William, the Whiggish ideal of a warrior-king, is fundamentally linked to the martial iconography used to buttress the image of early Georgian monarchy.[120] After the twelve-year reign of Anne, a woman physically enfeebled by numerous miscarriages and continuous ill health, Whig writers celebrated the ascent of the Hanoverians, soldier-princes with considerable military experience, as a return to a heroic warrior kingship last embodied by William. This martial imagery is underpinned by the accomplished military record of George I and the Prince of Wales: the King had distinguished himself as a field marshal of the Holy Roman Empire and in military campaigns against Turkish forces in Hungary in the 1680s, while George Augustus had fought bravely on the side of the Grand Alliance in the War of the Spanish Succession. Thus Daniel Defoe exults that there is no longer 'A Woman on the Throne, but a

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[115] Samuel Croxall, *An Ode Humbly Inscrib'd to the King* [etc] (London, 1714), 6.
[116] 'Verses on his Sacred Majesty's Royal Entry,' in *A Collection of State Songs, Poems, &c.* [etc] (London, 1716), 121. For a discussion of this graft imagery, see Smith, *Georgian Monarchy*, 25.
[117] John Dennis, *A Poem On the Death of Her late Sacred Majesty Queen Anne* [etc] (London, 1714), 11.
[118] Leonard Welsted, *An Epistle to Mr Steele* [etc] (London, 1714), 2.
[119] George Sewell, *A Poem Upon His Majesties Accession* [etc] (London, 1714), 10.
[120] For the fashioning of the early Hanoverians as warrior-princes, see Smith, *Georgian Monarchy*, 22-24.

vigorous and magnanimous King; a Prince […] as able to handle the *Scepter*, and wield the *Sword*, as he is to wear the *Crown*'.[121] Welsted rejoices that the throne was now occupied by a princely 'Hero', who is 'Expert to train to Arms her valiant Bands,/ And lead successful Wars in foreign Lands'.[122] Ambrose Philips acclaims the King's military record in fighting for a religious cause against the 'infidel' Turks: his 'Fame in early Youth acquir'd,/ When Turban'd Hosts before his Sword retir'd'.[123] John Dennis adopts a more bellicose tone, issuing a warning to any 'guilty Tyrant' who might provoke Britain to war; he configures the King as a wrathful, avenging Jove, and Prince George as Jove's son, Mars, the god of war:

> The King, like *Jove*, shall crumble them to Dust
> With his avenging Thunder; and his Son,
> As once he did on *Audenard's w*ond'ring Plains,
> Shall, like the God of War, among them rush.[124]

The reference to '*Audenard*' recalls George Augustus' martial exploits in the Battle of Oudenarde of 1708, when the prince fought at the head of the Hanoverian cavalry alongside the victorious Allied forces led by Marlborough. The Duke himself wrote a glowing account of Prince George's conduct in battle: '[he] distinguished himself extremely, charging at the head of and animating by his example [the Hanoverian] troops, who played a good part in this happy victory'.[125] Whiggish propagandists were quick to contrast the prince's courage and patriotism with the 'treacherous' actions of the Pretender, who had fought alongside the French army in the same battle. In a broadsheet printed in 1708, William Congreve compares the cowardice of the 'Popish Pretender' during the Battle of Oudenarde with the valour of George Augustus, 'Young *Hannover* Brave'.[126] As we have seen in Dennis' tribute, Prince George's military accomplishments continued to be celebrated after the Hanoverian accession. Susanna Centlivre adopts the same bellicose tone as that of her male contemporaries. In a poem published in 1717, when Britain was under the threat of invasion by

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[121] Daniel Defoe, *Strike While the Iron's Hot* (London, 1715), 18-19.
[122] Welsted, *Epistle*, 2.
[123] Ambrose Philips, *An Epistle to the Honourable James Cragg, Esq* (London, 1717), 5. Subsequent references are to this edition.
[124] Dennis, *Poem*, 22.
[125] Quoted in John Van der Kiste, *King George II and Queen Caroline* (Stroud: Sutton, 1997), 23.
[126] William Congreve, *Jack Frenchman's Defeat* in *POAS*, 7:341-2.

Sweden, a new ally of the Stuart Pretender, Centlivre glorifies the Hanoverian prince as a 'Young *Augustus*', recalling his heroism in the War of Spanish Succession to warn off the Swedish king:

> How wilt thou dare these Hearts of Oak to meet,
> Shou'd Young *Augustus* deign to lead the Fleet?
> *Augustus! He! W*ho striding o'er the Slain,
> Hunted thy *New Ally* oe'r *Flandria*'s Plain.[127]

Centlivre's friend, Nicholas Rowe, similarly lauds Prince George's martial valour: 'Thee *Audenard*'s recorded Field,/ Bold in thy brave Paternal Band […] And saw with hopeless Heart thy fainting Rival yields'.[128] Echoing Dennis' figuration of the Hanoverian royals as Olympian deities, Rowe draws upon epic imagery in his depiction of George Augustus as a swift-footed Achilles of Homer's *The Iliad*: 'Wingy-footed was he Born,/ Swift as the fleeting Shades upon the golden Corn'.[129]

The conception of the Hanoverians as militant soldier-princes was also combined with an interest in mitigating their foreign, outsider status. Panegyrists sought to naturalize the Teutonic identity of the early Georgians by drawing upon the imagery of a native British warrior kingship in the figures of the medieval Plantagenet monarchs, an attempt facilitated by the Hanoverians' own blood descent from the Plantagenets.[130] While George I's hereditary claim to the throne rests with his descent through his matrilineal grandmother, Elizabeth of Bohemia, a daughter of James I, Whig poets were eager to emphasize the King's Plantagenet inheritance through his patrilineal descent from Henry II of England and Henry's daughter, Matilda.[131] This not only side-steps George's Stuart connections (which are clearly inferior to that of the Pretender), but fits into a useful Whiggish narrative of the Hanoverians as heirs to a native and heroic British genealogy in the figures of Plantagenet warrior-kings who asserted British dominance over the arch-enemy, France. Thus Centlivre lauds George Augustus, the Prince of Wales, as a heroic Plantagenet king: 'FROM Great *Plantagenet Augustus* springs,/ By *His* Example taught to Conquer Kings'.[132] Nicholas Rowe hails

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[127] Centlivre, *King of Sweden*, 7.
[128] Rowe, *Ode*, 33.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Hannah Smith has pointed out the 'use of Edwardian images […] to create a much needed anglicised persona for the Georgian monarchy'; Smith, *Georgian Monarchy*, 25.
[131] Ibid., 40-41.
[132] Centlivre, *King of Sweden*, 8.

George I as 'Thou great *Plantagenet*! Immortal be thy Race!'[133] Joseph Harris highlights and equates both the King's Stuart and Plantagenet bloodline: 'A Prince Allied by *James* the I*st* and great *Plantagenet!*'[134]

In *The Vision*, a pseudo-Spenserian poem published in 1715, Samuel Croxall effectively provides a genealogy of British heroes to which George is heir, in order to create a native, anglicised identity for the German elector.[135] The work shares some features with Centlivre's address to Eugene of Savoy. Croxall's poem takes the form of a dream vision; the speaker lies sleepless in bed during a 'tedious Night' (p.3), and awakens to a glorious vision of a pavilion of fame set in a Spenserian '*Faery* Court' (p.5). Croxall evokes 'a Princely Cavalcade' (p.7) of historical, British and proto-Whiggish heroes, whose virtues are articulated on a Whiggish premise: these champions had either triumphed over the arch-enemy France, battled Popish Catholic forces or fought for the 'Cause of *Liberty*' (p.7). Thus we are given a vision of medieval barons who opposed the arbitrary power of King John (p.7), and a series of medieval Plantagenet kings: Edward I fashioned as a champion over excessive ecclesiastical power (p.9); Edward III who vanquished the French in the battlefields of '*Cressy*' (p.9); and Henry V who 'scourge[d] the growing Pride of perjur'd *France*' (p.10). The train of heroes continues to Elizabeth I, the Tudor champion of the Protestant cause (pp.11-12), and pointedly omitting all the Stuart monarchs, Croxall goes on to valorize 'Immortal *WILLIAM'* (p.12). These models of heroism end with 'Illustrious George' (p.19), thus fashioning the German royal as heir to a long line of British champions, who embody partisan notions of princely virtues and patriotic kingship. Croxall's catalogue of heroes, then, functions as Whiggish models of authority with which to acclaim the Hanoverian dynasty and reclaim these German princes for a native, British royal inheritance.

But Croxall was not only concerned with models of political sovereignty but with notions of literary authority in his depiction of two native (and proto-Whiggish) bards who preside over the royal

[133] Rowe, *Ode*, 32.
[134] Joseph Harris, *A Funeral Pindarique Ode* [etc] (London, 1714), 8.
[135] Samuel Croxall, *The Vision* (London, 1715). All references are to this edition.

procession: *'Chaucer* the parent of *Britannic* Lays' (p.15) and his 'fellow Bard' (p.15), Spenser.[136] Alongside a British royal inheritance, Croxall enacts a native literary lineage to which, implicitly, he is heir. Croxall's privileging of a native poetic past is part of the Whiggish cultural project to advocate a British literary tradition free from the bondage of a classical past. Indeed, the pseudo-Spenserian features of the poem embody this impulse to repudiate classical forms and machinery in favour of home-grown, patriotic models. While Matthew Prior had attempted a Tory revival of Spenser[137] during the reign of Anne, Hazel Wilkinson has shown that in the months after the Hanoverian accession, there was a Whiggish drive to 'claim Spenser for the new regime' through the publication of the first eighteenth-century edition of Spenser (published by Jacob Tonson and edited by John Hughes) on 23 October 1714, just three days after the coronation, and the appearance of Croxall's panegyric, *An Ode Humbly Inscrib'd to the King, Occasion'd by His Majesty's Most Auspicious Succession and Arrival. Written in the Stanza and Measure of Spencer* (1714).[138] These publications, argues Wilkinson, were intended to supersede Prior's version and reappropriate Spenser for the Hanoverian regime.[139] *The Vision* is clearly part of this partisan contest and of the Whiggish imperative to secure appropriate models for a native poetic tradition, which parallels the drive to carve out a British royal lineage for the Germanic new dynasty.

This bid to create a native literary tradition perceived to be free from the taint of classicism (and its association with a Royalist-Stuart past) is also apparent in Thomas Tickell's panegyric to George I, 'The Royal Progress' (1714), a work lauded by Addison as an 'excellent Specimen of the True [sublime]'.[140] As we have seen, Whig panegyrists created a martial iconography for the Hanoverian royals through vigorously masculine images of heroic soldier-kings. Tickell's address to the King employs similarly militant imagery, but eschews classical machinery in favour of the Whig

[136] Williams has explored the Whig appropriation of Spenser, Milton and Chaucer during the reign of Anne; Williams, *Literary Culture*, 147-50.
[137] See Prior's imitation of Spenser in his poetic celebration of the Battle of Ramilies: Matthew Prior, *An Ode, humbly inscrib'd to the Queen* [etc] (London, 1706).
[138] Hazel Wilkinson, *Edmund Spenser and the Eighteenth-Century Book* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 32.
[139] Ibid.
[140] Joseph Addison, *Spectator* 620 (November 15, 1714) in *Spectator*, 5:117.

poetic mode of the heroic sublime predominant in war panegyrics of William's and Anne's reigns. Tickell pays tribute to George I's heroic past and military campaigns in Hungary, in terms that recall the images of carnage and martial violence of the jingoistic war poems of previous reigns, which glorified the heroism of William and Marlborough:

> Not so he march'd when hostile squadrons stood
> In scenes of death and fir'd his gen'rous blood;
> When his hot courser paw'd th' Hungarian plain,
> And adverse legions stood the shock in vain,
> […] Here pleas'd the land of Freedom to survey,
> He greatly scorns the thirst of boundless sway:
> […] Where ev'ry meadow won with toil and blood
> From haughty tyrants and the raging flood. (27-38)

Tickell's encomium to George is reminiscent of Addison's sublime poetic celebration of Marlborough in *The Campaign*; George's military greatness is venerated not only for its 'toil and blood' but for the King's thoughtful and measured leadership, with connotations of the emergent impulses of 'politeness'. In the midst of the horrors of war, George was calm and 'pleas'd the land of Freedom to survey'; similarly in Addison's *The Campaign*, the famously 'Calm and serene' (295) Marlborough '[i]n peaceful thought the field of death survey'd' (288). As discussed in the section on Trotter's panegyrics, Addison explicitly dismisses the use of classical apparatus in favour of celebrating Marlborough's achievements in their true 'native light':

> Marlbro's exploits appear divinely bright,
> And proudly shine in their own native light;
> Rais'd of themselves their genuine charms they boast,
> And those who paint 'em truest praise 'em most. (477-80)

Tickell similarly declares his intention to commemorate George I in truthful, 'faithful lays':

> His shining march describe in faithful lays,
> Content to paint him, nor presume to praise:
> Their charms, if charms they have, the truth supplies,
> And from the theme unlabour'd beauties rise. (17-20)

My reading demonstrates that the Whig poetic mode of the heroic sublime continued to be employed in the early years of the Hanoverian era, in order to augment the image of the early Georgians as heroic warrior-kings. Nevertheless, as we have also discussed, Hanoverian

panegyrics by Centlivre and her Whiggish contemporaries such as Nicholas Rowe and John Dennis are marked by the deployment of a classical idiom refashioned to serve Whiggish objectives. The co-existence of different and divergent literary modes reflects the variety and complexity of Whig poetics in its attempts to articulate political ideology and themes. My focus on these differences and discrepancies sheds revealing light on the far from monolithic development of a politicized literary aesthetics within Whig culture, an issue which became a matter of contention in Whiggish literary circles. In 'The Royal Progress', Tickell, a close friend and protégée of Addison's, confronts the issue directly, denouncing his contemporaries who 'disdain'd the rules of art':

> When Brunswick first appear'd each honest heart
> Intent on verse disdain'd the rules of art;
> For him the songsters in unmeasur'd odes
> Debas'd Alcides and dethron'd the gods,
> […] One in old fables and the Pagan strain
> With nymphs and Tritons wafts him o'er the main;
> […] Exploded fancies! that in vain deceive,
> While the Mind nauseates what she cann't believe. (1-14)

Tickell scathingly dismisses pagan mythology as 'Exploded fancies', which call for the reader's suspension of disbelief. As we have seen, Croxall too opted for a native literary precursor in the form of Spenser, a model battled over with his Tory rival, Matthew Prior. Thus, despite the existence of dominant forms and themes, the poetic evolution of the period cannot always be defined by a straightforward connection between politics and aesthetics, but is perhaps best described as an ongoing partisan battle over the ownership of appropriate models and forms, to serve specific political exigencies and objectives.

The evolution of Whig poetics in the early Hanoverian era represents a continuation and development of the imagery and myth-making of previous reigns, modified to suit the demands of a new ruling dynasty. However, Hanoverian succession literature is also marked by new themes and concerns relevant to Britain in the second decade of the eighteenth century – a Britain finally at peace after two successive and extended wars on the continent, but whose investments in those wars enabled it to acquire for itself a new status as a military behemoth and major world power. Alongside peace are the related themes of trade, commerce and empire; while Britain had

reinvented itself as a 'trading nation' since the early 1700s, the onset of peace opened up lucrative trading opportunities, including the promise of commercial treaties with France and Spain granting exclusive trade rights to Britain, as well as the *Asiento* monopoly of the slave trade in Spanish America secured in the Treaty of Utrecht.[141]

Thus, notwithstanding the martial iconography predominant in Hanoverian panegyrics, peace and prosperity are also pronounced themes. Centlivre's address to George I concludes in a biblical image of peace: 'So when th' Almighty caus'd the Floods to cease,/ He fix'd his Bow in Token of the peace' (p.8). The end of the biblical deluge is symbolic of the cessation of the violent military and partisan conflicts of recent decades; the 'Bow' or rainbow a covenant with the divine marking the end of destructive struggles in favour of peace and prosperity.

In *An Epistle to Mr Steele on the King's accession to the Crown*, Welsted prophesizes the wealth and prosperity that peace and imperial expansion are expected to bring. His depiction of the Thames as an ambitious imperial stream overflowing with riches gestures to Pope's conception of the river in *Windsor-Forest*:

> Commerce again prepares to lift its head,
> Again to flourish, and its bounds to spread;
> The Merchant shall transplant in *British* Air
> Whatever growths remotest Regions bear,
> […] *Thames*, swelled with Wealth, his envious Banks oreflows.
> Seeks other Shores, and a new Empire knows. (p.4)

Welsted invokes the commonplace personifications of 'smiling Plenty' (p.4) and the Goddess Liberty (p.5) but also adds the less conventional figure of 'Credit' (p.5), who embodies the sophisticated credit-based financial system that underpins the fiscal-military state:

> Here, Credit rises with lost Fame regained;
> Guarded by Honour, and by Truth sustained:
> Her powerful Art discloses glittering Mines,
> And when she bids, a new creation shines. (p.5)

In a Whiggish-mercantile reconfiguration of the rhetoric of divine monarchy, John Dennis extols

[141] See Gregg, *Queen Anne*, 361.

George I's 'Godlike Bounty' as the source of Britain's wealth and 'Plenty'.[142] Underpinning this, however, is a thoroughly mercantile awareness of the links between employment, manufacturing and commerce:

> […] the wise Conduct of the best of Kings
> Will shine and then his Godlike Bounty flow.
> The Rich with flowing Plenty will o'erwhelm,
> Employ and nourish our yet num'rous Poor;
> Our manufacturers will increase and raise;
> Our commerce will improve, and will extend.[143]

Coupled with the blessings of a 'glorious' peace, George's reign is prophesied by Dennis to bring abundant wealth, captured in the vivid image of Britain's plains overflowing with the 'Riches of the Earth':

> But when this glorious long continu'd Peace
> Shall advance Commerce to its utmost Height
> […] The Riches of the Earth, the Joys of Heav'n
> Shall overflow *Britannia*'s blissful Plains.[144]

However, the peace extolled in these Hanoverian poems is not a gentle pacific state (as depicted in Restoration affirmations of Charles II's peaceful and merciful rule), but a more complexly formulated irenic status maintained and underwritten by vast military power. This parallels a self-conscious awareness of Britain's newly acquired status as a major military and world power, a clear shift of perception from that found in the laudatory verse of previous reigns. Joseph Harris glorifies Britain's military capability and naval supremacy: 'A Conqu'ring Navy, ready it self to spread; Hark how the *British* Canon formidably roars!'[145] Drawing on Stuart mythic tropes we have seen employed by poets of different political inclinations, Britain's imperial ambition is articulated through the obeisance of a personified 'Asserted Ocean':

> Whilst starting from his *Owzy* Bed,
> Th' Asserted Ocean rears it's Reverend Head,
> To View and Recognize its *Lawful Lord*!
> And with a Loyal Willing Hand restores

[142] Dennis, *Poem*, 25.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Ibid., 26.
[145] Harris, *Pindarique Ode,* 9.

The Empire of *Great Britain's* Watry World.[146]

Similarly, a panegyric by Croxall configures both Jove and Neptune as acceding dominion over land and sea to a triumphant Britain, poised to expand its influence over Europe and '*India*'s burning Sand'.[147] As the oceanic deity proclaims:

> Since to this warlike People fierce and bold,
> Great *Jove* has giv'n his Empire of the Land,
> Nor I, thro Length of Days, infirm and old,
> Can longer well the weight of Rule withstand;
> I yield my Pow'r to their more able Hand:
> Let ev'ry River, as his Waters flow
> O'er *Europe*'s Soil, or *India*'s burning Sand,
> Bid distant Nations pay that Homage low
> To fair B*ritannia*'s Fleet, which they to *Neptune* owe.[148]

However, the use of classical tropes to conjoin peace with military supremacy can produce discordant results. Croxall draws upon the familiar 'return and celebration' motifs to hail George's arrival in Britain, depicting 'gentle' nereids and tritons incongruously accompanying a 'Magazine of War':

> Her Anchors weighing; and unfurl'd her Sails,
> His Navy next conducts the Godlike King,
> […] Blow soft, ye Gales; yet quick, O quickly bring
> The precious Life committed to your Care;
> Your sweetest Airs ye gentle *Naiads* sing;
> While finny *Tritons* on their Shoulders bear
> *Britannia*'s Fleet, a moving Magazine of War.[149]

Giving credence to his emphatic dismissal of the use of classical models, Tickell more successfully employs the poetic mode of the heroic sublime to proclaim Britain's imperial prospects. In 'The Royal Progress', the rhetoric of the sublime elevates Tickell's vision of the country's glorious future:

> Ten thousand vessels from ten thousand shores
> Bring gums and gold, and either India's stores;
> Behold the tributes hast'ning to thy throne,
> And see the wide horizon all thy own! (65-68)

The heroic mode also heightens Tickell's conception of Britain's national prosperity and military

[146] Ibid., 10.
[147] Croxall, *Ode*, 9.
[148] Ibid.
[149] Ibid., 7.

power; the vivid images of a 'floating forest' of ships and London's 'thousand spires' evoke a sense of awe and wonder in the reader:

> By the next dawn doth great Augusta rise,
> Proud Town! The noblest scene beneath the skies!
> O'er Thames her thousand spires their lustre shed,
> And a vast navy hides his ample bed,
> A floating forest! From the distant strand
> A line of golden cars strikes o'er the land. (111-6)

Ambrose Philips' *An Epistle to the Honourable James Cragg, Esq*, a panegyric to George I addressed to James Cragg, the Whig Secretary of War (who was also one of Centlivre's patrons), combines an interest in the emergent mode of 'politeness' with the familiar themes of trade and imperialism. As did Addison and Tickell, Philips declares a poetic concern with depicting subjects in their true natural light. His conception of the Thames explicitly dismisses mythic representations of the river replete with nymphs and sirens (a possible dig at his rival Pope's depiction of Father Thames in *Windsor-Forest*), to project 'a Peopled Stream' thronged with sailors and merchant ships:

> The Rivers long in ancient Story fam'd
> Shall flow obscure nor with the *Thames* be nam'd:
> Nor shall our Poets copy from their Praise,
> And Nymphs and Syrens to thy Honour raise;
> Nor make thy Banks with *Tritons* Shells resound,
> Nor bind thy Brows with humble Sedges round:
> But paint Thee as thou art; a Peopled Stream!
> The Boast of Merchants, and the Sailors Theme!
> Whose spreading Floods unencumbered Ships sustain,
> And pour whole Towns afloat into the Main. (p.4)

Philips' busy waterway, captured in the striking image of 'whole Towns afloat into the Main', is a bedrock for trade and commercial enterprise, recalling, for example, Addison's famous prose account of The Royal Exchange as a 'busie Multitude' of trading and urban activity.[150] As we have seen, Pope's *Windsor-Forest* also invokes the 'Unbounded Thames' (398) as a vision of the trade and prosperity and international brotherhood that concord is expected to bring. Thus both Philips and his arch-rival Pope enact the river Thames as a national symbol of trade and commerce but through employing sharply divergent styles and methods.

[150] Joseph Addison, *Spectator* 69 (May 19, 1711) in *Spectator*, 1:294.

Philips' verse epistle also conceives a strikingly informal image of George I, depicted at leisure at his 'lov'd Retreat' (p.4) of Hampton Court. The King 'lays his Regal State aside' (p.6), appearing 'without the bright Disguise/ Of Pomp' (p.6). The focus is on the King's 'inborn Worth' (p.6); Philips' conception of George's innate virtues conforms to Whiggish notions of gentlemanly 'politeness'. The King is praised for his 'winning Aspect' (p.6) and 'his becoming Ease' (p.6); his 'manly Wit and Sense with Candour join'd' (p.6); and rather disingenuously in view of George's well-known linguistic shortcomings, the King's '[s]peech with every Elegance refin'd' (p.6). Philips crafts an image of the first Georgian king as a 'polite', congenial, gentleman-king at leisure, who is nevertheless concerned with affairs of state as when he 'plans the Wonders of succeeding Years' (p.3) – projects which emphasize the familiar Whig themes of trade, commerce and empire. The King almost resembles a mercantile man of business who formulates 'schemes of Commerce' in his mind:

> From the smooth Terrass as He casts his Eye,
> And sees the Current Sea-ward rolling by;
> What schemes of Commerce rise in his Designs!
> Pledges of Wealth! And unexhausted Mines!
> […] Our Fleets shall undiscover'd Lands explore,
> And a New People hear our Cannons roar. (p.3)

These nascent concerns with trade and mercantilism are apparent in Centlivre's *An Epistle to the King of Sweden From a Lady of Great-Britain* (1717), an intriguing, satirical, anti-Jacobite war poem, which has not received the critical attention it deserves. Published in March 1717 (eighteen months after the Jacobite 'Fifteen'), the work responds to the threat of a possible invasion by pro-Stuart Swedish forces under the command of Charles XII of Sweden, a new ally of the Stuart Pretender. Centlivre adopts a bellicose stance in warning off the Swedish king, coupled however with her familiar comedic tone. In the only scholarly reading of the poem to date, Kathryn King rightly points out that Centlivre's address is 'a mock version of the poem of female counsel to kings', which cautions the 'rude Warrior' (p.5), the King of Sweden, against his belligerent posture: 'To *Thee* a Woman sends with Gen'rous Care,/ And Warns thy Rashness timely to beware' (p.5).[151] The work also falls within the model of the female defender of an embattled monarch, as seen, for example, in

[151] King, 'Political Verse,' 217.

the post-civil war poetry of Katharine Philips.[152] Centlivre adopts the role of a patriotic voice of the nation and defender of the Hanoverian monarchy: 'AIM then no more, fond Prince, at *George's* Throne,/ Wake from the flatt'ring Dream, and guard thy own' (p.9). She sees off the external threat by augmenting the standing of the Hanoverians, underscoring that George rules by the affection of his people: 'But here thy brutal Force no Crown shall gain,/ By Love, as well as Arms our Monarchs Reign' (p.7).

As did her male contemporaries in their Hanoverian panegyrics, Centlivre articulates the same pride in and awareness of Britain's military power. She recalls the British champions of the War of Spanish Succession: 'These are the *Men*, who on the *Flandrian* Plains/ O'erthrew the *Grand Monarch* in Ten Campaigns' (p.9). As we have seen, she invokes the Prince of Wales' heroism in the Battle of Oudenarde as a warning to the Swedish king. Centlivre also glorifies British military superiority in 'ev'ry Element', in particular its naval supremacy 'from Pole to Pole':

> In ev'ry Element alike we Reign,
> And launch our ready Squadrons on the Main:
> Our Champions, jocund o'er the flowing Bowl,
> Reigns in their Wooden Worlds, from Pole to Pole;
> Fearless of Danger, cut their conqu'ring Way,
> And from invading Tyrants scour the Sea. (p.10)

The belligerent Charles XII was projected by Stuart loyalists at the time as a Jacobite hero and commemorated, for example, in the poetry of a pro-Stuart contemporary of Centlivre, Anne Finch.[153] Centlivre's poem seeks to diminish Charles' status as a Jacobite champion and rallying point by ridiculing the Swedish king and his threat to Britain, employing a mixture of fantasy and satire to enact the notion of military conflict on comedic terms. Centlivre invokes the might of the British army, whose soldiers are comically arrayed in 'Modish' garments of velvet, silk and lace:

> Think but what Terrors will they Spirits seize
> When thou shalt face such Enemies as these;
> See a Battalion lac'd with Point *d'Espan*,
> And warm in glowing Velvets leads the Van:
> With Warlike Air, th' embroider'd Chiefs appear,

[152] See Katherine Philips, 'Upon the double murther of K. Charles,' in Philips, *Works*, 69-70.
[153] See Anne Finch, 'VERSES Written under the King of Sweden's Picture,' in *The Poems of Anne, Countess of Winchilsea*, ed. Myra Reynolds, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1903), 91-92.

> And gracefully the Looms rich Labours wear:
> […] The Gold-Clock'd Stocking draws the Gazer's Sight,
> And *Verdin*'s Red-top'd Shoe, stitch'd round with White:
> Fine *Meclin* Laces round their Fingers play
> From Snowy Shirts, at least chang'd twice a Day. (pp.8-9)

Sweden's military threat is rendered foolhardy and absurd by this comical satirical portrait of 'embroider'd Chiefs' leading an army of fops dressed in 'Gold-Clock'd Stockings', 'Fine *Meclin* Laces', and snowy white shirts 'chang'd twice a Day'. On the other hand, the catalogue of fine garments and materials also gestures to the luxurious products of Britain's mercantile expansion and trade. Centlivre's poem evokes the commercial and consumerist impulses of Britain in the eighteenth century, as did her male contemporaries, both Whig and Tory. Addison's famous paean to the Royal Exchange glorifies the fruits of trade and commerce: 'The single Dress of a Woman of Quality' including the 'Muff and the Fan' is 'often the Product of an hundred Climates'.[154] The period's bourgeoning consumerism is memorably embodied by the opulent commodities on Belinda's dressing table in Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* (1712): the gems from '*India*', the '*Combs*' of tortoiseshell and ivory, the 'Patches, Bibles, Billet-doux'.[155] But while Pope's depiction of Belinda's feminine toilette parodies the arming of a martial hero – 'awful Beauty puts on all its Arms' – Centlive inverts this satirical impulse to envision military action as a parade of the latest fashions and luxuries.[156] By the beginning of the Hanoverian era, then, the notion of martial heroism was increasingly displaced by trade and consumerism. Britain the military juggernaut not only wields armed supremacy, but as a global emporium, dominates the world of commerce and trade in the latest commodities and luxuries.

In the figure of Belinda, Pope betrays a misogynistic impulse to displace the consumerist obsession with luxury and acquisition on to women. By contrast, Centlivre endows the materialist consequences of mercantile expansion on to the male section of British society, in her satirical portraits of battle-hardy soldiers as feminised, extravagantly dressed fops. This resistance to the misogynistic imperatives of an emergent commercial society has already been seen in Centlivre's

[154] Joseph Addison, *Spectator* 69 (May 19, 1711) in *Spectator*, 1:295.
[155] Alexander Pope, *The Rape of the Lock, and Other Poems*, ed. Geoffrey Tillotson, vol. 2 of *The Twickenham Edition*, 156.
[156] Ibid.

gaming plays. In her address to the Swedish king, women are satirically configured as 'Arbitrators of the *War*' (p.6), who control the armed forces with a flirtatious wave of their fans: 'At *Flurt* of *Fan*, our armed Legions fly,/ And they who dare offend, must dare to die' (p.6). Kathryn King interprets the 'metonymic fan' as marking 'the relegation of women to the private, feminine and amatory sphere coming to stand alongside and apart from the sphere of politics, commerce and war […] In the gender-divided world then under ideological construction, women exercised political agency by virtue of their influence [only]'.[157] This argument is difficult to sustain in view of Centlivre's own emphatic assumption of a public and political voice at a time of military crisis. Indeed, Centlivre's articulation of national defence parallels her vision of these female arbitrators of military action; both display an assertive patriotic commitment to safeguard and support the British nation, which belies the confinement of women in a domestic, non-political 'separate sphere'. While the fan as a decorative accessory signals new mercantile impulses, as we have seen, consumerist ramifications in the poem are not gender exclusive; any frivolous, 'drawing room' connotations of a woman's fan are counterpoised by the displacement of other luxury commodities on to male figures on the battlefield.

Centlivre's public poems embody her attempt to fashion a distinctive literary persona as an outspoken female advocate for the Protestant Hanoverian succession. At the birth of a new royal dynasty, Centlivre was at the forefront of the Whiggish endeavour to celebrate and affirm the Hanoverian accession, and endow the ruling family with compelling images of royal sovereignty. Attention to the neglected succession literature of George I's reign sheds revealing light on the continuing evolution of Whig poetics. The dynastic image-making of the early Hanoverians drew upon extant Whiggish poetic modes and emphases, while providing important new perspectives on the emergent themes of peace, trade and empire. My reading also reveals the surprising breadth and variety of Whig verse. Hanoverian panegyrists employ a number of different poetic modes, styles and idioms – including the sublime, classicism, pseudo-Spenserianism, satire and the rhetoric of 'politeness' – in order to eulogize early Georgian monarchy and proclaim a newly acquired vision of Britain's national greatness and imperial ambitions. These findings stand as a correction to the

[157] King, 'Political Verse,' 218.

recent conclusion by Mark Knights on the debased value of panegyric verse in the late Stuart and early Georgian era: 'partisanship compromised panegyric; it certainly helped to devalue the address of thanks, subverting part of its original intention of unified acclamation'.[158] At the beginning of a new dynastic era, and what was to become a long period of Whig hegemony and corresponding intra-party conflict, Whig writers were still united in their aim to affirm the new ruling dynasty, on whom they projected a cohesive vision of their political aspirations. Susanna Centlivre numbered as one of the most ardent of Hanoverian loyalists, and her panegyrics register almost all of the significant themes and emphases as that of her male contemporaries. Yet Centlivre's poems also display her distinctive female voice. She refashions popular forms, such as the Whig verse epistle, to establish a sociable female network of Hanoverian supporters; she employs her familiar comedic tone to stare down and diminish a national military threat; and her engagement with nascent consumerist impulses resists and reverses the dominant misogynistic manoeuvres to displace the materialist ramifications of a mercantile society on to the figure of 'the consuming woman'.

[158] Mark Knights, 'The Loyal Address: Prose Panegyric, 1658-1715,' in *Stuart Succession Literature: Moments & Transformations*, eds. Paulina Kewes and Andrew McRae (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 334.

# CONCLUSION

Whig political commitments were important drivers of female literary production during the bitter partisan struggles that marked 'The Rage of the Party'. The three women writers who form the focus of this study were articulate supporters of the core tenets of Whig ideology – the Protestant succession, a contractarian polity, religious toleration – and made significant interventions in the contentious partisan debates of the day. Yet they also adapted and refashioned dominant themes and forms to produce strikingly feminocentric versions of literary Whiggism, revealing a richer, more complex picture of the breadth and variety of the Whig cultural programme than has been previously conceived.

The findings of this thesis have material implications for scholarship on both Whig literary culture and early modern women's writing. Whilst important pioneering studies of literary Whiggism have largely focused on male writers and the genre of poetry, my research reveals that the post-Revolution theatre was an important parallel site of Whig cultural formation which included the participation of women. Whig hegemony in the theatre impacted contemporary drama, which directly engaged with the concerns of an emergent Whig culture: the reformation of manners and refashioning of 'virtue'; the affirmation of Whig notions of liberty and patriotism at a time of war; and the defence of commercial virtues in a period of revolutionary financial change. The Whiggish contemporary stage was an important source of support for women writers, who deftly capitalized on the patronage and industry networks of the theatre to enable and support their literary careers.

Attention to the broader socio-political impulses of Whiggism – moral reformation and the discourse of 'politeness' – enriches our understanding of Whig cultural production. Reform was a key Whiggish ideological thrust at a time of military engagement that witnessed partisan claims to national and martial virtue. Steele's influential *The Christian Hero* marked a transformation in the heroic template to privilege Christian values and humane virtues – qualities that are emphasized in the Whig military plays: Rowe's *Tamerlane* and Trotter's *Revolution*. Women writers were at the forefront of the moral imperative for reform, as witnessed in Trotter's strategic self-fashioning as an

arbiter of morality – a public persona that was widely acknowledged and lauded, testifying to the perceived ethical and moral value that female playwrights brought to the reformed stage.

The culture of 'politeness' exerted a significant impact on Whig drama and poetry. Centlivre's gaming plays demonstrate her feminocentric notion of commercial virtue; against the portraits of a capricious 'Lady Credit' by her male contemporaries, Centlivre asserts the value of a virtuous, stabilizing female agency in a speculative credit economy. Her drama registers the misogynistic drive to displace consumerist impulses onto the stock figure of 'the consuming woman'; this is mitigated however by Centlivre's corresponding vision of the enabling impact of speculative activities on women. 'Politeness' also influenced the evolution of Whig poetics in the reign of Anne by moderating the bellicose martial idiom of Williamite military verse through a polite distancing from disturbing depictions of heroic violence. Coupled with the concurrent moralist drive to emphasize a military hero's humane and Christian virtues, this produced a heroic model which effectively combines martial valour with empathetic and benevolent qualities. This impulse was particularly evident in female heroic verse; all the three women writers examined in this study eschewed graphic violence in their war panegyrics to privilege a gentler, more humane notion of heroism.

This study offers fresh perspectives on the relationship between aesthetic form and political ideology. The focus on female responses to the dominant themes and tropes of Whig verse substantiates the existence of a vital and distinct Whig literary culture, which propounded Revolution principles and Whig cultural values. Yet my findings also highlight a far from monolithic development of a Whig literary aesthetic. Alongside the dominant drive to reform the native poetic tradition as espoused by Joseph Addison, Thomas Tickell and Ambrose Philips, other Whig writers, including Susanna Centlivre, Nicholas Rowe and John Hughes, deployed a classical idiom and poetic iconography associated with Royalist-Stuart culture, but fashioned and reshaped to serve Whiggish ends. The latter process is illuminated in the Tory-Whig exchange between the partisan writings of Centlivre and Pope; Centlivre borrows and manipulates the Royalist-Tory idiom of the works of Alexander Pope and John Dryden in order to articulate a belligerent Whiggish vision of the peace. My reading of the neglected succession literature of the Hanoverian accession demonstrates the

breadth and variety of Whig verse; whilst united in their aim to celebrate and affirm the new Protestant dynasty, Hanoverian panegyrists employed different poetic modes, styles and idioms including the sublime, classicism, pseudo-Spenserianism, satire and the rhetoric of 'politeness'. The evolution of Whig verse, then, cannot always be defined by a straightforward connection between politics and aesthetics, but is probably best described as an ongoing partisan battle for cultural authority and the ownership of appropriate models and forms to serve specific political exigencies and objectives. The proto-feminist aims of Egerton's Whiggish public poems further complicate the connection between politics and aesthetic form. The sublime, a poetic mode associated with radical political ideology and later, with assertions of Whiggish liberty, is also revealed as a genre that lends itself to expressing sexual political liberty. Concurrently, the dominant Whig drive to repudiate classical machinery is resisted by women's keen engagement with the nine muses – a classical trope which enacts a powerful vision of the feminine and an unassailable source of female literary authority.

The findings of this thesis hold material implications for the critique of early modern women's writings. Whig political loyalties are significant drivers of female literary production, which substantiates Kathryn King's contention that women writers comprise a spectrum of political identities, in contrast to the received view that Tory affiliations are more conducive to female authorship. The Whiggish post-Revolution stage was a source of vital support for women writers, who capitalized on the close-knit theatrical network to forge useful connections within Whig literary circles and obtain material and professional support for their works. The stage provided female authors with access to prominent Whig patrons whose endorsement granted legitimacy to their writings and financial support to their careers. The focus on the roles of Stuart court culture and Royalist literary coteries in political readings of early modern women's writing has tended to overemphasize the significance of Royalist-Tory commitments on female authorship. Attention to a range of 'micro-climates favourable to women' may enable us to gain a broader understanding of the

variety of conditions that support women's public writings.[1]

The unusually productive level of women's dramatic output in the period or the phenomenon of 'The Female Wits' is well known. Yet feminist frameworks that emphasize exclusion and estrangement – through focusing on the misogyny that female playwrights faced and their perceived antagonistic relationship with the dominant culture – obscure women's dynamic engagement with their socio-literary and political world that underpinned the flourishing of female dramatic writings.[2] This has material implications for women's poetry given the close connections between dramatic and poetic production that we have observed. It is tempting to surmise that Egerton, who did not write for the stage and was the least productive of the three women writers, may have been handicapped by her more limited access to the supportive networks of the theatre. Feminist approaches benefit from the turn towards more open and engaged models, which enable us to appreciate women's participation in contemporary literary and political networks and the ways in which they supported female literary endeavours.

This is not to say that the notion of female solidarity was not important. The female literary network of 'the Nine Muses' enabled a landmark production of women's poetry, and helped support women's intersecting careers as dramatists and poets. Trotter's heroic drama was marked by her engagement with the prominent Whig women, Lady Henrietta and the Duchess of Marlborough, and her access to the Lockean-Burnet circle was assisted by another female intellectual, Elizabeth Burnet. Centlivre's gratitude towards her mentor, Mary Pix, is evident from the benefit performance she provided for Pix's estate. Centlivre's succession panegyrics reveal the impulse to create a sociable female network of Hanoverian supporters. Egerton's political commitments are amply displayed in her Whiggish poetic tribute to a powerful female monarch, Anne. Yet Egerton's interest in the notion of female authority (interpreted by Barash as evidence of a pro-Stuart feminocentric culture) is illuminated when considered alongside her responses to male figures of authority, William

[1] Grundy, 'Poetess,' 253.
[2] See for example, Medoff, 'daughters of Behn,' 39-49.

III and the Duke of Marlborough.[3] Female engagement and solidarity are important, but their significance is best considered alongside women's dynamic interactions with their wider world and other factors impacting their authorship. Manley's treatment of her former friends illustrates the competing drives of gender and political loyalties, and how female solidarity can fray under partisan pressures.

Attention to women's political engagement illuminates other aspects of their authorship. Trotter's emphasis on morality which has invited accusations of dullness and prudery by modern critics takes on new meaning in the context of the Whiggish drive for reform.[4] Trotter's assumed role as an advocate for virtue is a strategic authorial persona which enables her to carve out an empowering role for herself within the dominant culture. Egerton's well-known proto-feminism which has hitherto been considered within a biographical context is transformed when set alongside her Whiggish commitments and interest. Her pro-woman claims were not just responses to the strictures of her personal and marital life, but were enabled and informed by the tropes of political and aesthetic liberty propounded in Whig ideology and verse. This has implications for the study of early feminism which has hitherto emphasized the writings of Tory polemicists, such as Mary Astell and Judith Drake. It also complicates the influential views of Carole Pateman and Hilda Smith that Whig ideology proved unhelpful to feminism.[5] Trotter's and Centlivre's interest in Whig reforming discourse produced empowering feminocentric notions of Whig virtue, which further suggests that Whig ideological impulses can draw enabling responses from women.

My research contributes to the ongoing drive to disrupt gendered notions of 'separate spheres'. While political readings of Whiggish women's texts are largely concerned with a Lockean notion of the marital contract and a domestic paradigm, my study's broader focus reveals how women's Whiggish commitments are more often articulated through their attitudes to partisan national issues: war, peace, martial heroism, finance, speculation and religious toleration. Women engaged with these notions in explicit dialogue with their male contemporaries – many of whom

[3] Barash, *Women's Poetry*, 245-50.
[4] See Fidelis Morgan, *The Female Wits: Women Playwrights for the Restoration* (London: Virago, 1981), 30.
[5] Pateman, *Sexual Contract*; Smith, *Reason's Disciples*, 57.

were their friends and colleagues – often refashioning the norms of the dominant culture. The recovery of these female interventions enhances our appreciation of women's discursive roles in the public sphere, and contributes to the feminist critical project to rewrite an exclusively male literary history. Factoring in women's neglected contributions to early Whig drama and poetry modifies our view of literary Whiggism; in contrast to accounts of a homosocial culture monopolized by a fraternity of male poets and exclusively male socio-literary networks, early Whig culture is revealed as one that accommodates and supports female loyalists (even one who belongs to the Catholic Church), whose distinctive contributions add a richness and complexity to the Whig cultural project that have not been previously acknowledged.

My reading highlights the different individual emphases of three women writers. Trotter was early Whiggism's female intellectual and proponent of virtue; drawn to Lockean philosophy, she capitalized on the Whiggish drive for reform to craft an empowering authorial persona as an arbiter of morality. Centlivre was both a consummate professional playwright and a vocal partisan poet; her drama and poetry articulate her interest in women's roles in early finance capitalism and her ardent support for the Protestant Hanoverian succession. Egerton, the proto-feminist poet, conflates her partisan and feminist commitments to produce an important early notion of Whig feminism. All these women writers were active players in a dynamic Whig cultural enterprise; they made significant contributions to the shaping of Whig literary culture in its crucial formative period and were major participants in its vitality and complexity.

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