

Master Thesis

Gender relations, gender inversion, and the use of masculine language in the plays *The Northern Heiress*, and *The Self Rival* by Mary Davys, and *Selected Plays* by Susanna Centlivre, Eliza Haywood, and Mary Pix.

by

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My interest in the Early Modern period was sparked by the course, “Shakespeare’s Sister: Gender Trouble in the Early Modern Period” brought to us students by Dr. N.N.W. Akkerman with much enthusiasm, insight and new information. In this course we took a closer look at the work written by women focusing on themes such as gender, sexuality, love, marriage, and the nature of men and women.

After an extensive search I came across the works written by Mary Davys (c.1674- 1732) who was, according to the *DNB*, “almost certainly born in Ireland,” in Dublin in 1674. Although regarded as a minor novelist, her work was considered influential in the development of the novel. Reading her work I noticed that, especially in her plays, female characters used words and demonstrated behaviour that could be construed as masculine.

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Master thesis

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Abstract

Plays by female dramatists of the seventeenth and eighteenth century show their awareness of their problematic position in a male-dominated society and their image of women is expressed through their heroines. Generally, women writers managed to portray more complex characters, and used a more sensitive writing style than male writers.

The principal aim of this thesis is to analyse the two plays written by Mary Davys with regard to gender relations, gender inversion, and the use of masculine language.

The second part of the thesis involves a close reading of the selected plays by Susanna Centlivre, Eliza Haywood, and Mary Pix in regard to the same traits for the purpose of comparison.

From 1700 to 1731, Mary Davys (1674-1732) wrote six novels, two plays, and a poem. These works reveal her on-going concern with gender relations, feminine, and masculine language, moral behaviour, and social order. A close reading of Davys' plays *The Northern Heiress* (1716) and *The Self- Rival* (1725) reveals her interest in entertaining her readers and demonstrates her focus on gendered power and immoral behaviour. Analysis of secondary criticism shows Davys' reputation for being innovative with regard to gender and language and being a "forerunner of Fielding" (McBurney 348). Davys' two plays extend over feminized female protagonists to those who enact masculine modes of behaviour for the purpose of gaining power and to those who foreground themselves in the text. Davys constructs characters who perform gender: females utter masculinized language and

perform masculine modes of behaviour to empower themselves and express their identities, thus enabling social change. Davys disapproves of characters performing feminized modes of behaviour, because these performances display a lack of rational thinking and authority. Davys's discourse follows the development of female protagonists who are virtuous and powerless to those whose overly feminized performances need reform and those who are empowered through gendered performativity and performance.

The English dramatist and poet Susanna Centlivre (1669-1723) is described as the most successful English dramatist after William Shakespeare. Centlivre wrote several letters, journalistic comments in *The Female Tattler*, seventeen poems, and nineteen plays between 1700 and 1722 (Finberg, *Eighteenth-century Women Dramatists* xvii-xxi). Her most successful play *The Busie Body* (1709), was nearly rejected by Drury Lane, for being "a silly thing wrote by a Woman" (Bowyer 96). The play follows conventions in that it features heroines opposing marriages organized by their guardians, and plots aimed at tricking those guardians out of their plans. *The Busie Body* is different though, because it adds a comic character Marplot, the "busy body" of the title. Close reading, and analysing secondary literature regarding *The Busie Body* will reveal whether Centlivre is concerned with gender relations and the use of masculine language.

Eliza Haywood or Heywood (c. 1693-1756) was an actress and a prolific writer of about seventy-five volumes of conduct and advice literature, criticism, journalism, fiction, drama, translations, literary history, fictionalized biography, pseudo-memoirs, and literary parody. Her achievement as the editor of *The Female Spectator* between 1744 and 1746 is especially remarkable. Haywood's play *A Wife to be Let* (1724) is a rather sentimental comedy marked by didactic and moralising traits. Close reading, and analysing secondary literature will reveal whether Haywood's *A Wife to be Let* displays covert feminist views, and whether she incorporates masculine language.

Mary Pix (1666-1709) is said to have been the most prolific female playwright since Aphra Behn (1640-1689). She wrote several poems, six tragedies, a novel, and six comedies and farces. Pix

is best known for her plays, including *The Beau Defeated, or the Lucky Younger Brother* (1700), a play with a conventional plot of a woman testing her suitor. However, her hero is a modest and virtuous gentleman, rather than the typical rake who's repentance at the end is merely performed. Close reading and analysing secondary literature will reveal whether Pix concerns herself with gender inversion through her sympathetic female characters, and whether these characters' discourse is characterized by masculine language.

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Chapter I. The Life of Mary Davys

In the preface of her first work, *The Amours of Alcippus and Lucippe* (1704), Mary Davys claims to be born in England, but in her preface of her novel *The Merry Wanderer* (1725), twenty years later, she asserts to be born in Ireland:

To tell a Reader I was born in *Ireland*, is to bespeak a general Dislike
to all I write, and he will, likely, be surprised, if every Paragraph
does not end with a Bull: but a Potato's a fine light Root, and makes
the Eater brisk and alert; while Beef and Pudding, that gross and
heavy Food, dulls a Man's Brain as bad as too much Sleep. (161)

Davys may have been concerned about the possibility of a negative reception when it were known she was born in Ireland. The excerpt from *The Merry Wanderer* clearly shows that Davys is not only proud of her descent but also views her alleged critics as not very intelligent. Martha Bowden says that: “[t]he evidence points equally clearly to her birth in England followed by removal to Ireland in childhood, as described in the novel *The Fugitive* (1705), a relatively autobiographical novel based on Davys’ arrival and first travels in England. The only contemporary reference to her birth, in Giles Jacobs's *The Poetical Register* (1720), places it in Ireland.” (Bowden 2003, 127).

As said above, Davys may have thought her career at a disadvantage if it was known that her native home was Ireland. But her claim in the Preface to *The Merry Wanderer* (1705) as quoted above, is not hesitant or apologetic at all. William McBurney states with confidence that Mary Davys was born in 1674 in Dublin (McBurney 348). There is no written information about Davys’ upbringing, education or the social class she belonged to. McBurney informs us that Davys married the Reverend Peter Davys, a friend of Jonathan Swift and headmaster of the free school attached to St. Patrick's (348), although no records of their marriage have survived (Bowden 140). The marriage did not last long unfortunately, as Peter Davys died in 1698.

Bowden relates that there is also little known about the births and deaths of her children. She probably had two daughters, Ann and Mary, who died young: “[t]he difficulty emerges with the baptism in 1699 of a child called simply "Piddy," daughter of Peter Davys, deceased clerk. A few months later there is a burial entry for a Mary, daughter of the Widow Davys. If they are not the same child, there is one unaccounted for—there are no other likely Davys’s in the register, and Davys herself left for London within the year.” (Bowden 137).

In her work there are no clear reference to her children. The seven year-old princess Ann in *The Northern Heiress* (1716) could refer to her own daughter Ann, or the touching scenes in *The Accomplish'd Rake* (1727) where a mother expresses unease that her daughter is about to die could refer to her own grief at the loss of her children. In the same novel Davys possibly refers to her husband when she describes Teachwell, an exemplary teacher who also dies young.

Bowden also mentions the confusing references to an older sister, a brother in the Indies and a cousin named Elliott: ”[i]n *The Reform'd Coquet*, she tells an analogical story about ‘my older sister’ who behaves coquettishly and loses a favorable match; it remains unclear whether this in fact describes her own sister, Roda Staunton, about whom the only details we have are Swift's description of her living with a lame child on charity from the Cathedral” (Bowden 139). The alleged brother and cousin Elliot are both characters in *The Merry Wanderer*—but are they fact or fiction? According to Bowden, Davys may have thought that the lack of information about her life would further her career as a writer or maybe it is just a sign of her time where women who wrote and published were frowned upon and better forgotten (Bowden 139).

Like her husband, Davys would have been Catholic and probably enjoyed some form of education as a child. She would have been home schooled focusing on reading the Bible and learning household skills. Her knowledge of and experience with acting would have been nonexistent. Performing and stage life in Ireland emerged well before Davys was born with Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford attempting to build the first theater in 1633 (Morash 4). During the same time in

England, there was a period of theatrical revival and ‘looser’ morals during the reign of Charles II (1630-1685) from 1660 until 1685 and the short reign of James II (1633-1701) from 1685 until 1688. However, when England became subject to protestant Mary Stuart (1662-1694) and her husband William of Orange (1650-1702) theatre life came to a hold. This was also a problematic time for Catholics. During the reign of Mary Stuart, and William of Orange the political situation of Catholics proved disastrous; for over one hundred years they were denied the right to vote and sit in parliament or any other public office. In 1701 the Act of Settlement settled the succession of the crown. It excluded anybody who was Catholic or married a Catholic from inheriting or possessing the crown, thus ensuring a Protestant succession. Mary Stuart, and William of Orange were succeeded by Anne (1665-1714), who became the first Queen to reign over England, Scotland and Ireland as one country in 1702. For Reverend Peter Davys this could have meant that his position was challenged as a protestant English rule was enforced leaving the Catholic majority at a disadvantage.

Bowden informs us that “Peter Davys was appointed Headmaster of the Free School attached to St. Patrick's Cathedral in 1694” (140). At some point in that year, he also published his book *Animiculum Puerile, or an Help for School Boys*, the grammar book dedicated to Archbishop Marsh, who appointed him to the school (Bowden 140-141). His assignment did not come about without difficulties as he was barred from school due to a prank that involved the students barricading themselves in the school and locking the masters out. Davys was shot in the thigh during this process, and only because of his determination to continue in his job, he was offered the position as Dean. Mary Davys discloses in *The Merry Wanderer*, “I once had a Husband . . . whom I lost in the twenty-fourth Year of my Age, and the twenty-ninth of his” (McBurney 348). As said before Peter Davys died in 1698 at the age of twenty nine, leaving Mary Davys a young widow with children.

Being a clergyman’s wife, Davys would have belonged to the lower gentry and enjoyed some form of education as is confirmed by her publications. In Davys’ time education was basically neglected in England. Even upper-class education was unorganized. Girls were mostly educated at

home, often by their mothers. Boys were also often educated at home but usually by tutors, as most schools proved to be inadequate. It was not uncommon for girls to be taught how to read as it was important for them to be able to read the Bible (Balmuth 17-20). During Davys' lifetime women were legally and socially inferior to men. Chastity and obedience were ancient but still valid prerequisites of the ideal woman. Especially in the eighteenth century, the supposedly female qualities of compassion, sympathy, intuition, and natural spontaneous feeling were virtually glorified. A woman's proper sphere was in the home with her children and at the service of her husband. This view was supported by church, state, and society in general.

Davys would have seen to the household and her children and assist her husband if so needed. After her husband was deceased, Mary had to face life as a young widow. According to Bridget Hill an increasingly number of widows preferred to stay unmarried (240). The widows who were well- to- do often received proposals, but were not likely to remarry. They would not only lose their legal identity, but also the control over their property. Around the turn of the century many widows carried on their husband's shop, farm or trade on their own, while, at the same time managing their household. Davys had no financial assets of herself as is apparent from her many requests to Jonathan Swift (1667-1745), a close friend of her husband. McBurney tells us that Swift thought the marriage an indiscretion, and grudgingly sent Mary several small sums of money until he returned to Ireland in 1714 (348). Bowden relates that Davys in the Preface to *The Reform 'd Coquet* (1724) implies she is without funds: "I must own my Purse is (by a thousand misfortunes) grown wholly useless to everybody..." (138). The money Swift so unwillingly sent over time would not have been enough to support her daily living.

Widows such as Mary Davys were left with few options. Being without funds or property of her own Davys would not have been approached by suitors and work would probably have been limited to being a governess. Being dependent on the charity of relatives would be another possibility. Davys chose none of these and as McBurney describes: she 'went for mere want to England' (348).

She appeared briefly in London in 1700 and then settled in York where she lived for the next fifteen years (McBurney 348). There are no records that give any insight as to why Davys chose to move to York. Martha Bowden wonders whether she may have had family in York or an opportunity for employment (2003, 138).

To generate an income Davys turned to writing, and following the example of Aphra Behn and Mary Manley (1633- 1670), she tried her hand at composing a play (McBurney 348). As far as records show, Davys' first play, *The Northern Heiress; or the Humours of York* (1716), was presented three times at the New Theater in Lincoln's Inn Fields. Davys was surprised at the success of the play as she revealed in The Preface: "The success it met with the third Night, was infinitely above what I had Reason to expect" (73). As was common in those days a play would only be profitable if it was performed three times. Davys was able to start a coffeehouse in Cambridge on the return and, thus, generate an income alongside her writing. Coffeehouses in eighteenth century England were places where men discussed politics and business but where women had no place. A respectable lady would not show herself inside a coffeehouse, let alone manage one (Robinson 2013). Davys would certainly have been scrutinized by women and probably received petitions accordingly, such as 'The Women's Petition Against Coffee' (Davison 2013).

As explained earlier Davys was able to manage the coffeehouse in Cambridge until her death on the success of her first play. Before she wrote *The Northern Heiress* Davys had already written two novels, *The Amours of Alcippus and Lucippe* (1704) and *The Fugitive* (1705). Both novels were revised in 1725 and given different titles. It is unknown whether they were successful in their initial or revised layout. After *The Northern Heiress* Davys wrote four more novels of which *The Cousins* (1725) was also revised (1732) and another play, *The Self Rival* (1725). As far as is documented *The Self Rival* was never put on stage. Her first major novel *The Reform'd Coquet; or the Memoirs of Amoranda* (1724) was published by subscription. With a paid readership that included Cambridge students, members of the gentry, and the authors Alexander Pope (1688-1744) and John Gay (1685-

1732), Davys was able to legitimise her writing, and the novel was a minor success. She wrote two volumes titled *The Works of Mrs. Mary Davys* (1725), one poem and two plays. Apart from *The Northern Heiress* which is kept at the Trinity College Dublin, none of her work is found in any library in England or Ireland (Bowden 140).

A year before Davys died, a letter seemingly from her hand was published in *The Grub Street Journal*, a weekly Journal (Williamson 361). In this letter Davys allegedly acknowledged that she was scheming by her wit only to “turn an additional Penny” (361). Davys responds with wit and determination though her health is fading: “Tho my Hands tremble and my Eyes are almost blind” (361). She pretends to be grateful to *The True Grubean Letter* for publishing the letter in her name and bestowing this great honour on her. Davys explains that “[t]he Novels may e’ne fight their own Battles all I shall say for or against them is, that they are too unfashionable to have one word of Baudy in them, the Readers are the best judges and to them I appeal...’ (see Appendices A and B for the Letters). Due to the comment Davys published, it became apparent it was a hoax letter. This was even more evident as *The Grub Street Society* was known to consist of hack writers and therefore Davys asking for admission would clearly underline the letter was not by her hand. The letter does signify the hostile environment Davys was exposed to as a woman, a writer, and owner of a coffeehouse.

When Mary Davys died in 1732 she left nothing behind: no assets, no manuscripts and no will. Her executor Thomas Ewin (1716- 1779) claimed he owned a dozen letters written by Jonathan Swift to the Davyses, but either they did not exist or they were destroyed. Probably, Ewin was her landlord, and Davys died in debt to him (McBurney 349). Mary Davys reached the age of fifty-eight and was buried in Cambridge.

Chapter II. Theatre, stage and main characters

Introduction

In this chapter the theatre, stage, playwrights, and audience will be described from around 1660 until around 1730 with the aim to provide a context. Furthermore, plots and main characters in Restoration Comedy will be described to allow a comparison in the following chapters.

Theatre

As far as records show, Davys' first play, *The Northern Heiress; or the Humours of York* (1716), was presented three times at the New Theater in Lincoln's Inn Fields in 1716 (Mc. Burney 348). Between 1660, when monarchy was restored, and 1716 when Davys' play was staged, theatre life had seen some major developments. Theatre life in London was revived around 1660 under the reign of Charles II (1630-1685). Thomas Killigrew (1612- 1683) an English dramatist and William Davenant (1606-1668), a poet and playwright, were granted patents to operate the only official theatres in London: The King's Company (1660-1682 Killigrew) and the Duke's Company (1660-1720 Davenant). The Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre was originally used by the Duke's Company. After the 1682 merger of the Duke's Company and the King's Company, Thomas Betterton (1635- 1710) and the United Company (1682) used the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, which was designed by Christopher Wren. The companies were businesses earning money by selling their shares to the actors as well as to non-theatrical entrepreneurs; if the company flourished, so did the actors. Each theatre company had a permanent crew of performers for the theatrical season from September to June. The repertory system was full of variety, different productions being offered each day; long runs were scarce. A play that was received favorable by the crowd might run for several days in succession.

To enhance moral reform, Charles II introduced actresses onto the English stage. Female performers were believed to function as a barrier against lewdness. Many plays also included

“breeches” parts in which an actress appeared in male clothing. Actresses cross-dressing and showing off their legs in tight pants were a sensation and instantly took the audience (Roach 32). As management was often focused on enhancing their own wealth and position, the actor Thomas Betterton started an uprising. He formed a new company in 1695 at the old theatre in Lincoln’s Inn Fields. The newly built Queen’s Theatre in Haymarket, was also used as an opera house. At the turn of the century the two London theatrical companies experienced considerable problems to survive. Their relentless rivalry resulted in imitating or mocking the other company’s success and the production of new performances as counter-attractions. Robert Hume states that the cheerful stealing, imitation, parody, and combination of elements of recent successes constituted half the history of the theatre then (Development 23).

An essential characteristic of Restoration playhouses and unique to England was an apron or forestage: the acting area was located in front of the curtain advancing well into the audience space, with entrance doors on each side. This forestage linked the auditorium and the stage, the audience and the play. Performers were standing right in front of the crowd, which resulted in a special closeness to the audience. For that reason playwrights often included soliloquies and asides to the audience. In order to increase seating capacity, the forestage was cut back over time. Actors lost their forward acting area and had to retreat into the scenic stage (Langhans 10-14).

Another development during the late seventeenth century were the first special effects used in theatrical productions. Wings and shutters, painted accordingly, were pulled on and off by stagehands to provide scenery, for example a street or a forest. They could be changed very quickly and were used in many different plays. Various mechanical effects were employed to make performers appear from above or below. As there was no electricity, lighting was not easily adjusted, but stage candles could be dimmed for darkness and chandeliers could be pulled higher. There were no historical costumes, performers acted in contemporary dress, which in general contributed to the audience’s sense of understanding of the play.

Audiences

Robert Hume states that there never really was a “genuinely *dominant* court coterie,” even though Court patronage was important and its decline caused difficulties for the two patent companies (Development 28). Towards the end of the seventeenth century expectations of the court-oriented audience changed. The merchant class started to attend the theatres more, and apart from voicing their criticism of the rude Restoration comedies they appealed for the reform of the English stage were heard. Writers had to entertain a rather small audience which now was beginning to be more socially varied in person and taste.

As stated above, the two theatre groups competed for the same audience. The fact that the drama of this period was “popular entertainment, not for the masses [...], but for a relatively small group of Londoners for whom the plays provided a frequent diversion” ought not to be forgotten (Development 29). Hume further compares late seventeenth-century theatre-going with turning on a television when bored, and wandering from one playhouse to the other to flipping from channel to channel (Development 30). Most of the seventeenth-century audience came from the leisure- and merchant class, was really conscious of itself, and felt to be part of the play (Development 28). In contrast to modern theatre, the playhouse was well-illuminated and the spectators could see each other quite well. Many playgoers knew the plays and their plots, especially if old plays were revived and they seldom remained silent during a performance. Spectators might answer back or let out cries of disbelief; they were able to move around freely during acts, and if a play was not good enough interruptions would be the consequence. Theatregoers were mainly interested in the actors’ performances and the productions, comparing them, and coming to see them again and again.

Noteworthy, there were only a few plays that dealt with genuinely aristocratic society like lords and knights. Knights and also puritan merchant figures are often only presented to be ridiculed (e.g. Jeffrey in *The Northern Heiress*). Most lower-class characters in Restoration drama are male and female domestic servants, ranging from long-suffering, stupid, or foolish to clever, witty, or scheming.

Liddy in *The Northern Heiress*, and Kitty (she merely *poses* as a servant) in *The Self-Rival* are portrayed as scheming maids, and Barnaby in *The Self-Rival* is a clever, crafty servant.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century royal patronage was abated, as Queen Anne (1665-1714) showed very little interest in the theatre. During this time where morals became more important again, times were also changing for the theatre and its audience. The tone of playwriting had to be adapted to the audience's rising criticism of vulgarity and indecent language; moral education rather than wit was expected of a good play. More and more middle-class patrons, who now formed a larger but less sophisticated audience, were attracted to the playhouses, demanding greater variety and visual spectacle as well as more song, dance, and entr'actes (Hume, Development 28). During these changing times in theatre life, Davys' play, *The Northern Heiress* (1716), was performed for the first time.

Playwrights

Playwrights received the turnout of the third performance or third night and ten consecutive performances were considered a box-office hit. If a play failed it was immediately dropped and the author did not receive any pay. New playwrights such as Mary Davys usually got a fair chance to stage their play – even if it might be only once. As the size of the theatre-going audience was limited, a play was seldom run more than one week. On the plus side, it meant that there was a quick turnover in repertoire, staging a large number of new plays, and there were rapid changes in theatrical fashion. It was characteristic of playwrights to try and please their audience with appealing characters who bonded with their spectators. Closeness to the audience had to be secured by prologues, epilogues, and soliloquies. Experienced playwrights often wrote specifically for one company, and adapted roles and characters especially for certain actors and actresses in order to attract a larger crowd who could relate to the plays more easily. A play's success could be dependent on a particular actor or actress that it

could not be revived without them (Hume, Development 23). As far as we know only Davys' *The Northern Heiress* (1716) was performed on stage and did not return after the third night.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth century, it was custom that playwrights became involved in their productions and had to act as directors as well. They had to rehearse with the performers and provide them with stage directions. This was a concern, especially for women writers, who faced the difficulty of giving their leading actors instructions. During Davys' time women writers were often frowned upon and their work was generally seen as silly and of no value. This meant that most women writers tended to 'write like men,' in order to be as successful as their male colleagues. But there are features in the works of women which distinguish them from male writings.

Plays by women are more likely to support woman-only scenes and female characters who open and close a play, thus realizing a female perspective. According to Jacqueline Pearson no full-length play by a female author lacks woman-only scenes. Especially ending a play and summing up its significance for the audience in the last lines provides female characters with a certain authority rarely found in plays by male writers. Female characters in plays by men are more likely to open than to close a play (Pearson 269). Women writers also granted female characters more prominence in the sense of spoken lines, allowing them to speak more than half the lines as in Davys' play *The Northern Heiress*. In general, women are allowed to speak more lines in comedy than in other genres, but the heroine will usually speak fewer lines than the gallant. Douglas Young states that the aspirations of the "new woman" of Restoration for a new independence and status in the real world are best exemplified in the play-world of the Restoration social comedies. He believes the female characters created by Etherege (George Etherege 1635-1692), Wycherley (William Wycherley 1640- 1716, and Congreve (William Congreve 1670-1729) optimally reflect these women and their aspirations and values (23). In contrast to Young, Pearson is of the opinion that Etherege, Wycherley, and Congreve accepted the double sexual standard, even if they created powerful, strong-minded, and brilliant heroines, because most often the heroine's dominance was confined to mere words (55).

In twenty-seven plays by Brackley, Cavendish, Trotter, Pix, Centlivre, Wiseman, Davys, and Cooper, female characters are granted half the lines or more (Pearson 65). They gained power “without moving too disturbingly outside the convention” (Pearson 52). Pearson argues that this presentation of “witty, sparkling heroines has little to do with real female emancipation” (65).

During the seventeenth and eighteenth century, widows and spinsters were seldom portrayed in drama. Even though in real life many women were not able to secure a husband, as there were more women than men, their position is rarely reflected in the contemporary drama. Attitudes to old maids were generally hostile, degrading, and offensive, and as a result widows and spinsters were often characterized as figures of ridicule, either portrayed as uptight and religious or as amorous and lascivious. Male writers often portrayed humour-butts, old maids, or fallen women more crudely than women writers. Most male dramatists treated the fallen woman in a heartless and unforgiving manner. Hardly any rake in a play by a man complies to marry a woman whose chastity he has ruined. When the woman is redeemed, she usually is left to marry a humour-butt. Only some women writers dared to attack the double standard in their plays, allowing heroines as well as their fallen women to protest the existing morals (Pearson 55). Female Restoration dramatists were more tolerant and sympathetic in their treatment of socially oppressed minorities, which is expressed in their portrayal of female outsiders such as old maids and widows. Even though writers such as Susanna Centlivre (c. 1667-1723) and Mary Davys probably wrote unparalleled work in the sense that they addressed these double standards, they also had their limits. Their position as pioneers would have been precarious, because they had a reputation to uphold or a livelihood to maintain. Mary Anne Schofield indicates that Davys was unable to maintain the rebelliousness of her early pieces; for instance *The Lady's Tale* (1725) and *The Familiar Letters* (1725), in which she is “challenging enough initially to make statements about the value of female life” but, as her career continues, finds herself “trapped and hedged in by [the romantic mode's] conventions” (88). Schofield concludes her essay, “*Mary Davys.*” *In Masking*

and *Unmasking the Female Mind*, by saying that Davys did not manage to live up to the promise displayed in her earlier pieces (89):

When the novel first existed as *The Fugitive*, it was a rebellious text; it displayed Davys' uncertainty about the future, her exile and isolation in Britain as an Irish person, and her general discontent with her position as a female author. This tone of dislocation and disenfranchisement is greatly altered with the revision as *The Merry Wanderer* (Schofield 81), but ultimately had to capitulate to "the controlling and all-powerful male world"(90).

Martha Bowden also comments on the questionable conventionality of Davys' novels in the face of her own life, which she describes as "a case-book study in the way in which patriarchal society fails women and how one woman survived in spite of it" (146). She takes a much more sympathetic view than Schofield, concluding that Davys' "survival through thirty-four years of widowhood [...] would surely have made a more compelling novel than the story of a girl who is reformed into a conventionally submissive wife by the man who wishes to marry her" (146).

Davys would not be the first whose early works are more bold and groundbreaking than her later works. Various reasons come to mind: Firstly, her advanced age; secondly the need to sustain an income; and lastly the changing social perception of women during the eighteenth century towards an image of a virtuous woman in distress who was supposed to stay home and leave the outside world to men. Bowden's final statement on one of Davys' last work, *The Reform'd Coquet*, reinforces these assumptions: "But I suspect she realized that her own story was one that her society was not ready to hear, and as a result it is lost to us as well, eager as we may be to know it" (146).

Characters and Plots

Restoration comic characters and plots are generally formulaic and often adaptations from foreign or older English sources. A playwright would borrow and connect plots and characters from several older or foreign plays. George Farquhar (c. 1677-1707) explains in his preface to *The Twin Rivals* (1703)

that a “play without a beau, cully, cuckold, or coquette is as poor an entertainment to some palates, as their Sunday’s dinner would be without beef and pudding.” (82). These stock types are the basic ingredients for any good play; to recreate them and weave them into entertaining plots is a great art and shows the playwright’s skill and accomplishment. Stock figures, which are defined by their wit and humour, are presumed to represent Restoration society. For the main part they carry revealing names hinting at attitudes, character traits, professions, or age, for example, “Greasy,” in *The Northern Heiress* or “Verjuice,” “Purchase,” and “Pastall” in *The Self-Rival*.

The most common plot is that of one or more couples of lovers outfoxing blocking figures on their way to wedded bliss and often overcoming financial problems – either the gallant is poor, or the impoverished father or guardian wants to enrich himself by keeping his daughter’s or ward’s money or by marrying his ward. There are usually two variants to achieve this goal, either the man has to conquer the woman, or the woman has to reform and humble the man. The couple of the main plot is often the sparkling and jolly couple, while couples in subplots tend to be more serious or more fastidious. For example in *The Self-Rival* a strong and gay couple, Maria and Colonel Bellamont is portrayed together with an atypical sub-plot couple consisting of Kitty/ Emilia, a scheming maid/ virtuous heroine who successfully pursues a feeble and effeminate gallant, Frederick. Another example are Gamont and Isabella in *The Northern Heiress* who form a rather vivid couple. Skeptical Isabella cannot stop testing Gamont’s sincerity and true love for her and Gamont’s love runs actually not “so high as she expects,” as her maid Liddy wisely puts it (38). He is deceitful, hesitant, and at least as interested in her estate as he is in her person, which might be partly due to his own problematic financial situation.

The Virtuous Heroine or Coquette

Margaret Lamb MacDonald starts her study *The Independent Woman in the Restoration Comedy of Manners* by saying that “the saucy, independent young woman of Restoration comedy” must consist in

any deliberation of comic heroines in the annals of English drama (1). Writing about “witty fair ones who brighten the urbane, sophisticated comedies of that half century from the restoration of Charles II to the reign of Queen Anne” (1), she is thinking of the heroines of Congreve, Dryden (1631-1700), Etherege, Wycherley, and Crown as well as the young women governing the comedies of Southerne, Vanbrugh, and Cibber. According to MacDonald, the virtuous heroine in her fullest development is “possessed of a sparkling wit and keen intelligence, an aggressive will to power and a heightened awareness of her own precarious position in a libertine world” (7).

While MacDonald emphasizes the “flowering of a long tradition of young, intelligent, articulate women who rebel against male-dominated society” (1) in Restoration comedy, she also deplores that this “new woman” (6) was declined any long- lasting attention in any full-length study of Restoration comedy, as the focus was consistently on the beau-rake (6).

What the heroines all have in common is a varying degree of wit, elegance, beauty, and an estate. The coquette is generally a woman who acquires power over others by use of manipulative language and is noticeably alert. Generally, the virtuous heroine is an example of a honorable way of life, usually in contrast to the rake, on whom society imposes less rules. Although the heroine may seem to have a free hand at how she acts, she has to maintain her chastity in order to prevail as a true heroine. In contrast to a man, who actively seeks to seduce the woman, the woman can only charm the man while remaining chaste. Social conventions of the period dictate how the heroine should conduct herself. Her only device is her wit, playing hard to get, making use of manipulating language, and putting on an air of indifference or even contempt. The heroine cannot allow her emotions to guide her actions – she has to keep cool and collected at all times. The gallant often experiences this aloofness as a deliberate cruelty towards him and he accuses her of enjoying his suffering. This attitude and behaviour is depicted in the heroines Maria (*The Self-Rival*), and Isabella and Louisa (*The Northern Heiress*) – and are commented on later in this chapter.

The Heroine's Friend

On occasion the heroine's friend is the heroine's equal, confidante, and adviser who goes through parallel courtship such as Isabella and Louisa in *The Northern Heiress*. Or the heroine's friend plays a more secondary part, and is merely a companion to the dominant and enterprising virtuous heroine. The heroine of the sub-plot is usually portrayed as more modest and passive than the female lead. Traditionally, the heroine's friend is paired with the rake's best friend and both couples end up married.

The Gallant or Rake

In the play, the character of a rake is generally dedicated to romance and amusement, love and gallantry, eloquence and wit, as well as tricks and mockery. Even though the rake of Restoration comedy is a stock character, his portrayal is not consistent. He can be characterized as perfectly admirable to utterly contemptible. These variations can be traced back to the social class they belong to. In general, those rakes who come from the highest social class possessed intelligence, refinement and wit, and were often portrayed more favorably whereas those from a lower class being less polished and elegant were portrayed more disdainful.

The Gallant's or Rake's Friend

The gallant's best friend can vary from an equal personage who goes through parallel courtship to a clearly secondary figure, contrasting the predominant protagonist. In most cases both young gallants end up married such as Gamont and Welby in *The Northern Heiress*, or Bellamont and Frederick in *The Self-Rival*, but on occasion only one of them marries. Generally the heroine's friend or confidante is matched with the rake's best friend.

The Fop

The fop is the comic fool of Restoration comedy, a ludicrous figure who is extremely assured of himself and basically narcissistic. In his essay on fops, Robert Heilman calls the fop “the butterfly, the dandy, the fashion plate, the affected man of taste, the social-vanguard exhibitionist, the embodiment of vanitas vanitatum” (363). Trying to appear refined and stylish, the fop is constantly imitating his betters, but he utterly fails to meet the standards of his superiors. He noticeably portrays supposedly gentlemanly or elegant French manners and overdresses, so that the audience can recognize him immediately. He often suffers physical humiliation, usually at the hands, of women and his social inferiors such as servants and maids.

The Female Humour-butt

A typical female humour- butt is prudish and foppish, uses many malapropisms, and tends to refer to herself a lot. Lady Greasy in *The Northern Heiress* is a female humour-butt with these typical traits, but she combines them with teasing and flirtatious behaviour. Trying to sound like a proper lady, she is unable to find the correct words on several occasions. For example when she warns her daughter’s suitor Tinsel “to come no more salivating under our Windows” (20) she actually means serenading. There are some passages in which Lady Greasy carries herself most unladylike, but in a rather masculine style, for instance when she discusses political matters with the other ladies at Lady Ample’s tea-table, drinking: “hot Ale” (24) and “Brandy” (25).

The Male Humour-butt

The humour-butt is for the most part not taken seriously and as a result usually only moderately ridiculed. Sir Loobily Joddrel in *The Northern Heiress* is a good example of this stock character. The country bumpkin’s appearance is scruffy as this line assents, “a Piss-burnt Periwig, a great Riding Coat, and dirty Linen” (45). Like Gamont and Bareface he also courts Isabella, but obtusely stays at

home to take care of his horses, stating, “I love my Horses, that’s true; but I love Mrs. Isbel too; and after I had seen them rubb’d down, and taken Care of, I came to look after her” (45). Sir Loobily is such a fool that he openly tells others that his horses are dearer to him than Isabella. When Isabella asserts that she is even better than a horse, as she can take care of herself, he replies, “[a]ds’bud, and so you can, or you have spent your Time ill; for I believe you’re at Age” (45), insulting her even more. At the height of his folly, he proposes to her, “[c]ome [...] we shall live mains happily. I can’t but think how lovingly we shall smoke our Pipes together, drink a Pot of Ale, and play at Put in a Winter-Evening” (46). His words are obviously very unladylike as he refers to her as being old and uses words one would connect with a male friend not a future wife. The humour-butt is utterly oblivious to the effect his words have on his surroundings and so he will continue to act as a fool throughout the play.

The Male Blocking Figure

Male blocking figures are usually very strict fathers, brothers, or guardians who are unmarried or widowed. They often disapprove of the heroine’s choice of a mate, either because they have already planned to whom she should be betrothed, or because they have no desire to pay for her dowry. The main plot commonly displays the ‘happy’ couple’s successful scheming of the blocking figure in order to obtain his consent in the final act. In *The Self-Rival*, Sir Ephraim is willing to coerce Maria to marry an old Lord, denying her any choice in the match, only because he is enthralled by the old Lord’s social standing, his title and estate. At the same time he is unable to control his own feelings for Kitty, Maria’s maid.

The Old Maid

In the seventeenth and eighteenth century women who were widowed and did not remarry, and women who had never married were often referred to as old maids. As said earlier, the general attitude towards these old maids was rather hostile, disparaging and offensive. Characters such as widows and spinsters

were rarely seen in drama and if at all, they were represented as figures of ridicule, either portrayed as prudish and devout or as amorous and lewd. In *The Self-Rival*, Davys introduces a more humane and appealing portrayal of, 'A good-natur'd old Maid', whom she contrasts with a less amiable, more conventional affected old maid.

Chapter III. Gender performance defined and analysed in Mary Davys' two plays

Introduction

The focus in this chapter will be on gender performance and Mary Davys' two plays *The Northern Heiress*, and *The Self Rival*, in relations to gender relations, gender inversion, and the use of masculine language.

Gender performance defined

As Davys would probably agree to, power in eighteenth century England lay with men. Through her work Davys illustrates how language and behaviour can reverse this unjust administering of gendered power. Through her female characters, who use masculine words and perform masculine acts Davys shows the audience that women, like men, can be powerful, authoritative and are able to assert their opinions constructively and rationally. Davys not only confronts us with gender issues through language but also pictures a moral prejudiced world where women are treated as unstable and deceitful. Through her assertive response to the attack in *The Grub Street Journal* Davys herself shows us the importance of women articulating their opinions and the need to do so in a masculine fashion as to change the way power is distributed. Davys's characters certainly display a combination of gendered performance as they speak or behave in ways that do masculinized or feminized modes of behavior and gendered performativity wherein they speak or behave in ways that do gender that presumes them as characters regardless of their sex. Her texts disclose how words and actions *do* gender work through performance and performativity with an emphasis on how she believes her characters to advance themselves socially.

Frederica Berdini and Claudia Bianchi describe that Langshaw Austin (1911-1960) is best known for two major contributions to contemporary philosophy: first, his 'linguistic phenomenology', a peculiar method of philosophical analysis of the concepts and ways of expression of everyday

language; and second, speech act theory, the idea that every use of language carries a performative dimension (in the well-known slogan, “to say something is to do something” (675- 676). Austin introduced the term performativity in a series of lectures on “words and deeds” and defines performativity as an utterance that actually performs, that is, “doing something rather than merely saying something” (Austin 25). He explains that: “The name is derived, from ‘perform’, the usual verb with the noun ‘action’: it indicates that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action--it is not normally thought of as just saying something” (6-7). Austin argues that, through certain utterances, speakers actually perform an act like marriage, or an apology and therefore utterances perform acts which “it is the purpose of the instrument [utterance] to perform” (Berdini, Bianchi 121). The significance of Austin’s philosophical position regarding performativity is to appreciate his concept that the utterance of certain words in certain ways conveys certain meaning. The way that words create reality and are intended to do something, is interpreted by the reader and in this way language functions to signal certain phenomena.

Judith Butler recognizably connects her notion of gender performativity to Austin’s ideas of speech act theory. She points out that the subject is not free to choose which gender to enact; to the contrary, gender is enacted by utterances or behavior regardless of the *doer* “There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very “expressions” that are said to be its results” (33).

Like Austin, Butler is implying that utterances and performances produce and convey meaning regardless of the speaker or actor and regardless of their sex. Therein lies the significance of the lines Davys writes for her characters: sometimes she asserts that the character’s utterance or language *does* something which presumes or precedes the character who is speaking. As such, these utterances may be interpreted as manifestations of masculinized modes of behavior or feminized modes of behavior before the reader detects or presumes the sex of the speaker. Characters portrayed by Davys are allowed to use masculinized or feminized words or act accordingly without adding any moral codes,

such as virtue and respectability, or instructions. As said before Davys not only constructs characters that enact performativity through language and dialogue, she often instructs her readers that males and females must perform rationally. As such Davys asserts that actors and actresses are not only agents of their own theatrical behavior, but are in a position to acquire power through their utterances.

The Northern Heiress (1716)

Davys' first play was *The Northern Heiress* (1715) and was staged in London. There are certain interesting aspects about the play. It is original and not derived from other sources and staged in rural York instead of London which was common in Davys' time. Furthermore the play provides an insight into the lives of the "humours" of York and local customs, focusing on the lives of tradeswomen. "Humours" being characters that show certain predominant characteristics in their personality, appearance and inclinations. Pearson regards the comedy as belonging to "woman-centred" or "profeminine" drama, which concentrates on the dilemmas of women (233). As is typical, particularly of the female written drama during Davys' time, the play does without coarseness and vulgarity but still succeeds in retaining "the liveliness, wit and unsentimentality of the Restoration comedy of manners" (Rubik 121).

What modest success *The Northern Heiress* enjoyed, however, was the result of the sections dealing with the "Humours of York." Here Mrs. Davys offered her London audience new comic material in the wives of former Lord Mayors of York-Lady Swish, a brewer's wife; Lady Cordivant, a glover's wife; and Lady Greasy, a Chandler's widow. With Chaucerian gusto, they discuss the delight of being "y-clept *ma dame*" and roister through a breakfast of "hot Ale and Ginger, Butter, Rolls, a huge Cheshire Cheese, and a Plate of drunken Toast," (23), for which they then pay, since one of the humors of York was, to reimburse the hostess for refreshments consumed. Lady Greasy, in particular, is vividly depicted- one suspects, from life- as she runs her Chandler's shop and boarding house, tries to keep her daughter away from a half-pay officer, and speaks a fine mixture of Yorkshire dialect and malapropisms' (McBurney 349).

According to her preface, Davys was pleased with the play's performance in 1716 for two reasons: first, she professes some gentlemen from York came to the play to damn it, but a "superior" number defended it; and, second, under the circumstances, she asserts the play was a success considering 'the Time of Year, and my own Want of Acquaintance' (73): "The Success it met with the third Night, was infinitely above what I had Reason to expect" (73). Fidelis Morgan points out that an important reason for the success of the play is its entertaining humor: "The play is funny, with amusing characters, among them Lady Greasy, who belches and stinks, and always comes up with the prettiest ways of putting things: 'Love is like a bug, 'the longer it sticks in the skin, the harder it is to pluck out' (65)." In trying to foreground Davys's satirical play amidst eighteenth-century satire and to contextualize her motivation in writing a play dramatizing the follies of the women of York, Ian Jack (1923-2008) notes that satire is "born of the instinct to protest; it is protest become art" (17). Certainly Davys does protest and tries to correct the folly of the women of York, some of whom perform acts in which they establish themselves and other women as subject to masculine dominance and their cultural conventions. She distances herself from these conventional performances through her characters who resist and oppose these cultural conventions and who show how gender performance constitutes identities, both masculinized and feminized. Davys shows through Isabella's masculinized contempt for women's insolence and exploitation by men, and Mr. Bareface's feminized behavior as a fop that gender is not merely a social concept, but essentially a performance in which characters adopt gendered attributes that disclose tenacity and authority or lack of tenacity and authority.

Emmett L. Avery supports Davys's perception of the play being a success. He gathers from a compilation of playbills, newspaper accounts, and theatrical diaries that *The Northern Heiress* opened at Lincoln's Inn Fields Theater in London on Friday, April 27, 1716, and was also performed on Saturday, April 28th and Tuesday, May 1st (400). And as a way to validate the meaning of a successful play being performed at the venue of Lincoln's Inn Fields, Avery comments, "Between 1714 and 1732 Lincoln's Inn Fields and Drury Lane pretty well dominated offerings of old and new English dramas"

(Introduction xxxiv). It is understandable, then, why Davys was delighted with the success of the play's run of three nights. Avery verifies that, indeed, a play benefits the author on the third night of a play's run, noting the receipts for the third night of *The Northern Heiress*'s run benefitted the author and consisted of "Receipts: money L20 16s. and tickets L51 3s" (400). Avery states that on a night that benefitted the author, which was usually the third night, the playhouse would keep about L40 to cover expenses or take all the income from the night's box office:

At a benefit the treasurer usually kept a sum equal only to the nightly charge of the house (a sufficient amount, around L40, to cover the cost of opening and operating the theatre for a night) or all the money taken in at the offices (the player keeping the income from tickets which he personally sold) or, in unusual circumstances, nothing at all, the whole of the receipts going to a player or charity. (lv)

Calculating that the third night of *The Northern Heiress*'s performance yielded L20 16s at the door and L51 3s in pre-sold tickets, it is conceivable that Davys earned between L20-L30 for her effort. According to Judith Milhous's and Robert D. Hume's *Playwrights' Remuneration in Eighteenth-Century London*, these figures would translate to approximately \$2,000-3,000 in purchasing power in an early twenty-first century time frame, a respectable sum for an eighteenth-century woman playwright's first and only attempt at staging her work. And, as Bowden points out, it is "[. . .] a substantial sum, especially if we remember Peter Davys's annual salary of L20, the sum that the cathedral was still paying its headmaster in the first decades of the eighteenth century" (xviiiix).

Plot

As said earlier *The Northern Heiress* was set in York and tells the story of Gamont, a young gallant, who fell out of favour with his father, who fell in love with his chambermaid. As Gamont and his sister Louisa disapproved of their father's proceedings, they had to leave his house. Now Gamont owns only a small fortune his uncle left him. Consequently he and Louisa moved to York, which is not as

expensive as London. Louisa has inherited some money of her own from her grandmother, with which she supports herself as well as her brother.

Welby, a wealthy friend of Gamont's, has just returned from his travels abroad. Having grown tired of his rambles, he now wants to settle down, marry, and have children. Alongside Gamont and Welby, the strong-minded and wealthy heiress Isabella is introduced, who is wooed by a number of gallants and fops, Gamont being one of them. Although she is in love with Gamont, she wants to test his love for her with "a Tryal or two" before she is willing to reveal her true feelings to him (36).

Lady Greasy, a chandler's widow, runs her late husband's business and lets lodgings. She is a dedicated and diligent business woman, who is greatly interested in providing her daughter Dolly with a wealthy husband. Destitute Captain Tinsel courting Dolly distresses her so much as to turn her into a proper shrew. She is loud, bawdy and smelly, even belches when invited to elegant and refined Lady Ample's breakfast table. This scene portrays her perfectly, when engaged in a conversation about business and local elections with Lady Swish and Lady Cordivant, enjoying a breakfast of "hot Ale and Ginger, Butter, Rolls, a huge *Cheshire* Cheese, and a Plate of drunk Toast,"(23) which she prefers to "flip flap Tea" (21).

Bareface is a wealthy would-be rake and a fop who is criticized incessantly by Lady Greasy for squandering the money his late parents had to work hard all their lives. He is such a dunce that he even forgets which girl he is in love with. Liddy is Isabella's clever and insightful maid, who wants to 'catch' herself a husband and in the end succeeds in tricking Bareface into marrying her. Other rural Yorkshire butts of humour are country booby Sir Loobily Joddrel, who is a foolish horseman, Lady Swish, a brewer's wife, Lady Cordivant, a glover's wife, and Sir Jeffrey Heavey, a country knight (*The Northern Heiress* 21, 25, 82).

Gender Performance in *The Northern Heiress*

The Northern Heiress, a satiric comedy concerning the women of York of whose behavior Davys mostly disapproves. In this satiric comedy Davys illustrates that gendered language and gendered behavior help women to determine gender relations and thus Davys shows how characters perform gender. Through her characters and their dialogue Davys illustrates the need for gender performance in order to address social conventions. Furthermore Davys initiates masculine and feminine gendered behaviour in her characters regardless of their sex. Although it seems as if Davys' satiric play is preoccupied with women's concern with status, social position and honor, she actually satirizes these conventions and customs of the women of York with an inclination for gossip, gatherings, and marrying wealth and security. Davys excited the audience's indignation by a wide variety of recognizable characters with whom they could easily identify: misogynists misuse women; mothers advance suitors with currency; fops use perfume and over tea ladies reveal prejudice, obtuseness, contempt, and an obscene concern with money—all unappealing traits in Davys's opinion. Again and again, Davys explicates the underlying importance of currency as power in this economy: women customarily pay for their tea when visiting each other's homes, several characters offer bribes to maids for information, and estates are food for gossip.

Davys illustrates through the courtship of several couples how genders are performed. She does this through her characters who portray features of masculine or feminine identities. Through the character of Gamont, Davys voices her opinion of the women of York: they are frivolous, lack substance and are discourteous. When asked by Welby early in the play how he spends his time in York, Gamont responds: "Why, we have abundance of People, but little Company; much Ceremony, but little Manners; many Folks with Titles, but few of Quality, tho' the whole Town abounds with Ladies" (82-3). The characters Davys puts forward gain valuable information through their gendered behavior as to achieve social change. As such, her works of fiction continue to promote her contention that enacting assertive language and gendered performance can benefit women to succeed in correcting

imbalances in power. Basically, Davys discloses her disapproval of characters who perform genders that defy social decorum and moral principle and as such need reform. More importantly Davys reveals her approval of characters whose gender performance derive from utterances or behavior that *do* gender work by speaking or acting in ways that show rational thought and moral behavior. These gender performances are in fact meant to restore imbalances of power in gender relations which were common in eighteenth-century England. Davys thus illustrates how gender performativity and performance of rational, authoritative language and behavior can counter conventions a various ways.

The play illustrates through Louisa's gender performativity of beautiful but silenced womanhood; Isabella's enactment of gender performance vis-à-vis utterances of anger, contempt, rejection, and self-esteem, and Mr. Bareface's performance of feminized maleness, that utterances themselves have the power to act either feminine or masculine. In these three examples, Davys reveals how females can enact feminized lack of power or masculinized possession of power and how males can enact masculinized power or feminized lack of power.

Importantly, Davys reveals her disapproval of characters who perform genders that violate social decorum and moral principle and therefore need reform. In contrast, she also reveals her approval of characters whose gender performance emanates from utterances or behavior that do gender work by speaking or acting in ways that manifest rational thought and moral behavior. Davys suggests that these enactments of gender work to upset or restore imbalances of power in gender relations and that forms of these self-constructions are at work in eighteenth-century England. Rather than merely satirizing the negative codes of behavior at work in eighteenth-century England, Davys illustrates how gender performativity and performance of rational, authoritative language and behavior can counter them in a variety of ways.

The implication of these characters is that, for the women of York and perhaps for women everywhere, wealth and status are important factors. Not only are they critical in gaining entry to the inner circles of polite society through marriage and in maintaining one's place there, but also as a factor in determining one's identity. Most remarkably, Davys illustrates that it is women in the private sphere who obsess about the necessity that social status, money, and titles afford. As Isabella remarks

to Sir Jeffrey: “it is the Sweets of Life that has done it; and if we must not enjoy them [the fruits of abundance, money, status], they are of no use” (96). Repeatedly, Davys illuminates the underlying importance of currency as power in this economy: women customarily pay for their tea when visiting each other’s homes in groups, characters offer bribes to maids for information, and estates are fodder for gossip. And as if to pay homage to this currency as power, Isabella attempts to trick Gamont into believing she has lost her fortune, but in a reversal of the traditional fortune test, he learns of her trick and professes his love for her knowing full well she possesses a large fortune, while Isabella is erroneously led to believe in his ideal manhood. Allardyce Nicoll argues that with this subplot Davys clearly illustrates men’s deceit and women’s foibles which manifest themselves in vanity and thereby make women vulnerable and blind to men’s superiority and aggressions: “The fundamental assumption, it is to be noted, of the “genteel” comedy is that woman, artificial, affected, vain, is a thing to be sought after and won by sheer brute strength or else by trick, the lover playing up to her nonsensical ideals, as with Lady Dainty and Sophronia, or by sheer deceit, as here” (163-4). *The Northern Heiress*, which does indeed illuminate folly, deceit, false values, male superiority, and female foibles, also reveals an ideology that reflects and reacts to contemporary behavior that is both offensive and understandably human at the same time. Thus, this particular drama is a critical interpretation of greed and vanity and the ways in which men and women perform gender to appropriate power.

Louisa’s Feminized Performativity

According to Gamont, his sister, Louisa, is the instrument responsible for his returning home to York after traveling to “see all the pleasures of the world” where all is “vanity” (81). His use of words show his gendered male authority; he is a man choosing to travel or not to travel the “pleasures of the world” alone. When Gamont reveals to his friend Welby that his sister Louisa is “pretty,” possesses good “humor,” and has inherited L8,000 from his grandmother he portrays his sister as a commodity. If Welby marries Louisa, her estate will allow him to remain in York and live quite comfortably.

Louisa's character has rather little dialogue, as if to underline she is only there to illustrate the importance of inheritance as performative currency in the marriage market. Her physique in this context is a mere asset to reach a goal such as marriage. But Louisa's beauty, humor, and wealth enact her identity; though she utters little dialogue and performs few actions, that same beauty, humor, and wealth *perform or do* her identity without regard to the doer, Louisa herself. As the tale unfolds, Louisa's wealth works for her in a way that satisfies her because it attracts a male partner who may not be too self-assured and therefore, malleable by "good Usage" (78). In the opening scenes of the play, Louisa states:

I should rather chuse a desponding Lover, than a presuming one; because it is an easier matter to cure one by good Usage, than t'other by ill; the one takes every civil Word and Action as an Effect of your Goodness, and thanks you for it; the other places your Contempt rather to your want of Taste, or Manners, than to his own want of Merit; so blames you for his Faults. (78).

Louisa's words show she prefers a man who is not that powerful, because in this way Welby's current status levels the playing field in their relationship. Through her wealth Louisa asserts and performs her authority once Welby has been attracted by her beauty and humor. Davys conveys that, in order to perform authority, Louisa needs a powerful estate. This means her femininity alone lacks the necessary assets needed to attract a fine man who is poor like Welby. Davys suggests that enacting performative femininity such as beauty and humor may work to strengthen Louisa's sexual orientation. However, in order to attract a man in York, one without title, rank, or estate, a feminized woman like Louisa, whose wealth performs her identity but whose character lacks power and authority needs considerably more currency than a mere physical presence. As stated above Davys explicates the underlying importance of currency as power in this economy: women customarily pay for their tea when visiting each other's homes, several characters offer bribes to maids for information, and estates are food for gossip. For example, Isabella attempts to trick Gamont into believing she has lost her fortune, but in a reversal of the traditional fortune test, he learns of her deceit and professes his love for her knowing very well she

owns a considerable fortune, while Isabella is erroneously led to believe in his flawless character and honorable intentions. To show that wealth and status are not the real purpose of life, Isabella remarks to Sir Jeffrey: “it is the Sweets of Life that has done it; and if we must not enjoy them [the fruits of abundance, money, status], they are of no use” (96).

When Louisa finally falls for Welby, she displays that she is a markedly weaker heroine than Isabella. She is not able to control her feelings, but only listens to her heart: if Welby’s “Estate and Humour prove of a Piece with his Wit and Person, Heaven of it’s Mercy defend my Heart; for I am sure I shall never be able to do it my self” (34). Louisa thus takes Welby’s wealth into account when talking about her affections for him, which stands in clear contrast to Isabella’s convictions. Louisa is not only portrayed as an independent and strong-willed coquette, but also as a loyal sister, as Gamont explains to Welby: “As to her Beauty, I shall leave you to be judge of it [...] but for her good Humour, I can give no better Proof of it, than to tell you, she denies herself the Pleasures of the Town, to live with me here, that by Supplies from her Estate, I may be enabled to keep up that Figure I have always made in the World (15). Reversing gender roles, Louisa provides for her brother with her own money, which she inherited from “an old Grand-mother” (15). Interestingly, these funds that are passed on by another woman also symbolizes the transferal of power from one woman to another. At the same time it is noteworthy that Gamont embraces the dependent role that is usually assigned to spinsters. Contrary to most brothers who sent their spinster sister away on his marriage, Louisa puts her brother’s wellbeing above her own, and surely manages to skillfully use his financial dependence on her in order to put Welby off. She puts her gallant to the test, informing him that she cannot marry him because she is resolved to marry only after her father has passed away or her brother has married, in other words, Gamont is no longer financially dependent on her. Louisa is therefore a financially independent young and devoted heroine, in pursuit of courteously partner. At the same time she is also a refined coquette similar to Isabella who understands how to play hard to get. When Louisa and Welby are alone and conversing they do act as a gay couple, but their dialogue is a little less sparkling than Isabella and

Gamont's. Louisa, even though she is financially independent, is not as determined, self-assured and active as Isabella, who is a wealthy heroine as well but dependent on her guardian.

Isabella and Louisa (*The Northern Heiress*)

Right from their first appearance; Isabella and Louisa enter laughing; the women are portrayed as equal coquettes, conversing about the question to whom the gallantry of a young man was designed. Their roles as independent heroines are also brought up by Gamont's question, "where have you been so early, spreading your Nets, that you have met with Game already?" (10). Gamont reverses gender stereotypes by using male hunting language. He furthermore points out right from the start that the two coquettes are in pursuit of gallants, and in contrast to feeble, passive women, are the designers of their own fortunes. Louisa, being financially independent, furthers this image, by stating: "I shall provide for my self, and save you from Disappointment" (10). As typical of a coquette, Isabella affects aversion and aloofness towards Gamont, which is disclosed in his lamenting: "Yes Madam, that Method you are perfectly Mistress of; for tho' you seem to reproach me with your civil Usage, the only Mark of your Favour I ever receiv'd, was a Box in the Ear, and a Week's Banishment, for only offering to snatch a Kiss" (11). There are only a few occurrences in the play where Isabella reveals her true feelings for Gamont, discarding all pretense: "Tis true, I do love her Brother [Gamont] more than Life; but he shall never know his own Power", "till I have made a Tryal or two of his Love, and the I'll use him as he deserves. For if I find values nought but Coin, I'll tear him from my Breast, and he shall ne'er be mine" (36). Isabella relates her apprehension that she is loved for her money and not for her true self, which is her reason for repeatedly testing whether Gamont is sincere and genuine. As Gamont correctly observes, she shows the typical coquettish "Cruelty of [her] Sex" when she "seems to doubt [his] Sincerity" (41). Isabella truly enjoys the power of being his financial superior, but is also concerned that if his father should die and bequeath his fortune to his son, "he will be imperious as he is now submissive" (37). Even when Gamont passes her first test and asks for her hand in marriage

supposedly despite her loss of fortune, Isabella, unaware of his knowledge, is still not satisfied and refuses him. Gamont finally closes the fourth act by revealing the coquette's passion for power and her feigned coldness and the assumed recipe against this: to act uninterested.

Fond of their Pow'r, and pleas'd to give us Pain, If with Respect we woo, then they disdain.
Seem but indifferent, she strait complies, Afraid to lose the Conquest of her Eyes. Thus
Women, by Contraries always tost, Are most complying, when you slight'em most. (61)

Isabella is really convincing in her role. When Louisa informs her that Gamont is about to leave town in order to disengage himself from her, Isabella boldly replies, "I shall be glad to see him, and wish him a good Journey," shocking Louisa into muttering "[s]o cold" (66) in an aside. Though Louisa does not approve of Isabella's coquettish and pitiless treatment of Gamont, she shows almost the same coldness towards Welby, following Isabella's earlier suggestion: "The best Way to prevent a Misapplication of our Favours, is, to shew non at all" (11).

The more authoritative Isabella also distinguishes herself by being more determined and self-assured than Louisa, which becomes clear when they are speaking about which type of man they prefer. Isabella says: "I rather chuse to use him [a gallant] as he expects, than as he deserves; for one had better have a Lover that makes himself too sure of one's Favours, than one that can never be persuaded he receives any at all." (11). So, Isabella clearly prefers a strong and heroic man who takes pleasure in his power. Isabella is a decidedly proud young woman who feigns to prefer a man who loves her but whom she does not love, to loving a man who does not love her. She not only pretends to be cold and standoffish, but also to be a self-determined coquette, with the intent on getting her own way, "as I am resolv'd to love the Man I marry, so I am resolv'd to marry the Man I love" (30). Isabella is conscious of her exposed situation as a wealthy heiress, as if she was aware of Gamont's words to his friend Welby, "I am in Love with an Angelick Woman; but there is 20000 l. to add to the Charm" (16).

Realizing that her suitors might value her estate even more highly than her person, she tells Louisa: “I never had Vanity enough to think any Thing, but my Money, could secure a Heart” (35). As such Isabella is another example of MacDonald’s concept of a truly virtuous heroine, who is aware of her precarious position as a wealthy woman in a male- and money-dominated world. Her power is not only enacted through her coquettish and witty banter with Gamont, which is typical of the gay couple, but also by her confidence and high expectations of a husband: “It will be very hard if my Person and Fortune can command nothing better than an old Country Knight [Sir Jeffrey]” (30). When Lady Ample tries to persuade Isabella to consider Sir Loobily Joddrel as a husband, “a Man young and handsome, rich and–” Isabella is quick to ironically interrupt her, “I suppose the next Thing would have been his Wit” (30). Lady Ample defends him saying, “if he be not so very quick in his Understanding, as your Favourite Gamont, he has an Estate and Title to make amends for” (31). But Isabella has no inclination to give up her firm conviction, criticizing mercenary marriages and the prevailing business of match-making:

What an Unhappiness it is, that our Relations never consult any Thing but the Pleasure of Wealth? Methinks, Madam, you that have a Taste for Wit, should never prefer a Fool to a Man of Sense”(31)

At the height of Isabella’s demonstration of her steadfastness and power, once more reversing gender roles, she reveals to Gamont that she now and solely by her own wish will consent to his earlier proposals:

Mr. Gamont, you have no Doubt wonder’d at my late Behaviour to you, and not without Cause; but I was resolv’d to be satisfy’d of your Sincerity, which now I am; and if you have any Inclinations or Wishes left for me, I am here both willing and ready to crown them. (68)

Gamont resigns to her dominance as conventionally a woman would do when he declares, “with humble Thanks, [receives] the Blessing” (68). Turning to her aunt, Lady Ample, Isabella saucily and self-consciously adds, “Madam, I desire you will please to pardon me, for disposing of my self without

your Consent; it was what I knew you would never give, so would not make you uneasy by asking it” (68).

Lady Greasy, a Female Humour-butt

As said earlier mothers and wives of Restoration comedy were generally absent. However in *The Northern Heiress*, the widow Lady Greasy is also portrayed as a mother. Like Louisa she is financially independent and not under male control. Lady Greasy is a female humour-butt who bears conventional character traits as well as atypical ones, combining priggish, foppish, masculine, and also coquettish features in her person. Although being portrayed as a rather vulgar tradeswoman, she insists to be called a lady. This is ridiculed by Gamont, who regards her as one of “the Aldermens Wives, who would be less ridiculous, were they less fond of being call’d Ladies” (16). Lady Greasy thinks highly of herself and the people she associates with: “Why, here is very good Company, I’ll assure you. Here’s me, and my Daughter, and a Gentleman and his Sister; then here’s a rich Knight came but last Night” (12).

As a typical humour-butt, she refers to herself first, which is generally regarded impolite and in bad taste. She foppishly boasts that her “Husband was a Lord” though she has to concede “nay, one of the best Sort of Lords, he was a Lord-Mayor” (25). On several occasions Lady Greasy misuses words which is stereotypical of a humour-butt. For example, she uses the word “*disgenderate*” (19) instead of degenerate when she torments Bareface with his dashing lavishness and reproaches him speaking “*misdainfully*” (20), instead of disdainfully, of his parents. Later she warns her daughter’s suitor Tinsel “to come no more *salivating* under our Windows” (20) when she actually means *serenading*. In another scene, Lady Greasy grumbles, rather unladylike, about her aching back, “I have got such a Pain in my Huck-bone, that when I once set, I can’t get up again” and explains that she suffers from a “Certificate” (24). When Lady Ample corrects her and tells her that she believes it to be it is *Sciatica*, her sheepish reply is, “[n]ay, I know not, it’s some hard Word; but whatever they call it, I am sure I

feel it” (25) and, as the climax of her crude behaviour, belches. There are some instances in which Lady Greasy conducts herself most unladylike, but in a rather masculine fashion, for example when she confers political matters with the other “ladies” at Lady Ample’s tea-table, drinking “hot Ale” (24) and “Brandy” (25). Davys wittily uses homely diction and a Yorkshire accent in Lady Greasy, for example when she is giving her opinion of stylish people of quality, “I know nought they are good for, but to mak Wark, and get one’s Maids with Barn” (19). Together with details of domestic life, such as: “Tea-Kettle,” “a clear starch’d Muslin Apron” (26), and “a Rowling Pin” (52), Davys supplies “comic country realism,” which she frequently put in her later novels (Nancy Cotton 158).

Lady Greasy is portrayed as a hardworking tradeswoman who is concerned with business and earning money. For instance in line 19 she mentions: “I would have come sooner, but was forc’d to stay to see some Tallow weigh’d; for there’s no trusting Servants now-a-days”. Traditionally puritans and other religious zealots were portrayed as industrious workers, and Lady Greasy bears some character traits of such a religious zealot. However here the meaning is not nearly as positive. In one scene Lady Greasy appears as a former coquette, describing her youth to her daughter: “I remember, when I was young. I kept Men at a Distance, and I had always a power of them at my Heels: For to say the Truth, I was very handsom; oh, I had a Complexion like Strawberries and Cream” (22). But not much later she is her prudish old self again, perceiving her daughter’s marriage as a business enterprise in a manner typical of male blocking figures: “I shall take Care to provide you a better Husband than he [Captain Tinsel]; one that has an Estate, and can make thee a good Festment, keep thee in fine Cloaths, and a gold Chain” (22).

When Lady Greasy finds out about Captain Tinsel’s love letter, she is outraged and turns into a right shrew, physically punishing her daughter Dolly, as Isabella describes: “She has pull’d the poor Toad about the House, and sous’d her with a Mug of Small Beer that stood on the Dresser, ‘till she looks like a Water-Witch” (40). As a rule such behaviour is observed in jealous blocking figures, so here Lady Greasy acts like a female blocking figure, trying her utmost to keep Dolly away from her

beloved. However, she suffers the fate of most blocking figures, being outwitted by the couple of lovers. Finally, reforms and is reconciled with the couple, even offering Captain Tinsel the chance to work in her business together with her: “Well, since it is gone so far, I have one Disposal to make, and upon no other Terms will I be reconciled. Let him throw off that tawdry Red Coat, put on an Apron, and I’le him take into the Business with my self” (70). When proud Captain Tinsel dismisses her offer, finding it “intolerable” to “submit to so servile an Employment” (70), she gives in again: “Come, Dolly, my Lass, don’t cry any more; since thou are so fond of a red Coat and a Sword, prithee take ‘em; for my Part, I’le e’ven throw by the Trade, and try if I can turn a Gentlewoman too” (70).

Even if her sudden reform is not exactly convincing, Davys’ warmhearted change in the portrayal of Lady Greasy from a genuine humour-butt, prude, fop, female blocking figure, and man-woman into an affectionate mother, who after all endeavors to make her daughter happy, is noteworthy. Lady Greasy is probably one of the most multifaceted female humour-butts in Restoration comedy.

Liddy, Scheming Maid and Friend to Isabella

Liddy is Isabella’s skillfully scheming maid in *The Northern Heiress*. Isabella has a high opinion of her generally unbiased demeanor and sense of equality. For example when she tells Sir Jeffrey: “for Nature has made no Difference betwixt a Gentlewoman and a Kitchen-Wench” (27). When Liddy assists Isabella in forging the letter from her uncle, Isabella compliments her: “Tis a Pity Nature did not chance thy Sex, and Fortune thy Vocation; thou wouldst have made an admirable Lawyer; for I find, as it is, you can speak for your Fee. [...] I can do nothing without thy Help” (37). Talking to her servant like this, Isabella asserts her trust in the equality of all people, disregarding their financial and social standing as well as their gender. It is also quite remarkable, if not entirely realistic, that Liddy, a maid, is able to write. Throughout the play, Liddy bestows her most loyal services upon Isabella, even when her orders clash with her own aspirations, like tricking Gamont with the fake letter. Liddy

faithfully abides by Isabella's wish, even though she worries that Gamont will not live up to Isabella's high expectations. She is surprisingly perceptive of Gamont's character and her judgment of Isabella's situation is realistic if not disillusioned. Being this perceptive Liddy equals many virtuous heroines who are highly conscious of their precarious position in a world dominated by money and social status. She is well aware that by letting Gamont in on the plot she "would betray my Lady, and Treachery I scorn" (38). When Gamont turns to Liddy for advice and asks her if he stands in Isabella's fair esteem, he places Liddy in a dilemma. Without betraying her lady, Liddy inscrutably says, "your Fate lies wholly in your own Behaviour, which must be manag'd with Circumspection [...] let Love and Honour be your Guide" (39). But her expectations that he will interpret her words justly and will act accordingly are low. Against her better judgment, Liddy goes along with Isabella's order to test Gamont's loyalty to her once more. She conscientiously complies though she fears that Gamont might not be able to pass the test, which would make Isabella the ultimate loser.

Bareface is another man who asks Liddy for her help in courting Isabella. Liddy first gets the impression that his intention is on her, and decides to "humour him a little" (31). In answer to his boasting about his estate she tells him, "[i]ndeed, Sir, as you say, such an Estate with your Qualifications, is infinitely preferable to a much greater, where they are wanting" (31). Foppishly and selfishly, Bareface in return praises her as a "Woman of a distinguishing Taste [...] who can set a true Value upon Wit and Beauty," adding that "there are not many such Women to be met with" (32). When Liddy discovers that he only desires her aid in order to break the ice between him and Isabella, she calmly bears it and starts to devise a plot to make him marry her. She accepts the well filled purse he offers her in return for her support, regarding it as "Part of his Wife's [in other words her future] Portion" (33).

When Ralph, Gamont's servant, comes to bring her a letter and tries to kiss her, she roughly fends him off him: "Stand off, Saucebox, and keep your Distance; I'd have you to know I have better Game in View, and scorn Rooks, while I can catch Woodcocks" (33). It is remarkable that Liddy uses

the same kind of hunter's jargon Gamont used to address the dynamic heroines Isabella and Louisa, she thus reverses the stereotyped gender roles and acts like a self-assured, proud woman. Ralph criticizes her for her behaviour, "you Chamber-maids are so full of your Ladies Airs, that you don't know how to be civil to your Equals" (33). Belligerent, Liddy replies, "[a]nd you Valets are so full of your Master's Vanity, that you think ever Body is your Equal; but I shall put you in a Way of knowing both your self and me" (33). The two servants, who both have a high regard for themselves, actually quarrel as equals, but Liddy is superior to Ralph because he desires her and cannot deny her anything. So Liddy is able to persuade Ralph to give her the love-letter he should deliver to Isabella from Bareface. Adding up the money Bareface spent in bribing her and Ralph, she surreptitiously concludes, "since he bids so fair for a Wife, I'll take Care he shan't be disappointed" (34).

When Bareface offers Isabella his heart, she invents a plan to trick him into marrying Liddy. Liddy, is to impersonate her mistress to achieve this. Isabella is mean and generous at the same time when she tells Louisa that she will dispose of Bareface's heart as she does of her old clothes, "either change it away for China, or give it my Maid" (66). She also summons Liddy and informs her that she is now ready to part with her and drops a hint at her plan, "I'm going to present you with a Husband and 400 *l.* a Year" (66). Of course, with this plot "Work's done to [Liddy's] Hand" (66). When Isabella steps out of the closet, thus disclosing the true identity of his newly wed wife to Bareface, he is dumbfounded and exclaims, "*Isabella* there! Why then who the Devil have I got here?" (71). Liddy, turning up her hood, replies, "[y]our true and lawful Wife, *Liddia Bareface*" (72). Bareface is thus exposed and ridiculed by everybody. Liddy, finally explains what has occurred: Come, Mr. *Bareface*, you can't blame me for making my Fortune; I confess I had a Design upon you, ever since you gave me the Five Shillings Bribe, to speak to my Lady for you, which, since I never did, it is but Reason I shou'd return them. [...] I always thought they would be part of your Wives [*sic*] Portion. [...] Then, Mr. *Bareface*, here's your Letter you sent to Madam *Louisa*. (72).

Isabella, as always, is at her maid's side and puts in a good word for Liddy:" I beg you will make a kind Husband to my Maid, for I assure you she is a Gentlewoman born, (and tho' perhaps you may never find it out) a Woman of very good Sense too " (72). Bareface, graciously bearing it, politely replies, "Madam, the more good Qualities she has, the more I have to thank you for" but in an aside reveals his true feelings, "Pox take you for your Present" (72). Liddy has thus achieved her goal by tricking Bareface, the wealthy would-be rake, into marrying her with Isabella's aid. She is the only maid in the four plays who correlates with the old prejudice of the maidservant in pursuit of a favorable match. In the last scene of the play, relations are in a way balanced when Isabella reveals that Liddy is actually of gentle birth and thus makes the union with the well to do Bareface more acceptable.

Interestingly, Davys gave this maidservant an ordinary name, Liddia, rather than a speaking name as was common for servant figures, thus alluding to her distinction from the lower class right from the start of the play. Liddy's abrupt reversal from a cunning maid to a truthful and reliable wife is not fully convincing. However, Davys included a joke at the end of the play, reversing gender and social roles. When Liddy returns Bareface's bribe to him: "it is but Reason I should return them.]"(154) she as a maid tips her well-to-do husband, which is again symbolic of Liddy's superiority over Bareface.

The Self- Rival (published 1725)

McBurney relates that *The Self- Rival* was never staged and that the reason lay in its:

slight merit; without a Lady Greasy to enliven the plot of multiple disguises in the house- hold of Sir Ephraim Purchase, the play had little to recommend it beyond faint reflections of Congreve and Steele. The authoress also encountered the general prejudice against the works of "female wits"; and in the prologue to the play "as it should have been acted at the Theatre-

Royal in Drury Lane," she made the conventional but justified lament: 'When Women write, the Criticks, now-a-days Are ready, e'er they see, to damn their Plays' (349).

Susan Staves asserts that *The Self- Rival* was written between 1716 and 1718. In comparison to *The Northern Heiress*, it is weaker in characterization and humour, and more conventionally set in London (182). The play relates the story of a young soldier, Colonel Bellamont, who pursues his beloved Maria Purchase. In order to trick Maria's overbearing father, Sir Ephraim, into giving him his daughter's hand in marriage, Bellamont impersonates his own uncle, Lord Pastall. Maria immediately sees through his deception, secretly agreeing to his plan, but outwardly taunting the elderly "uncle" wooing her. As Maria feigns not to recognize Bellamont, he is forced to be his own rival, courting her as himself and in disguise. In the sub-plot Sir Ephraim is deceived a second time. Kitty, Maria's maid, posing as a fortune teller, wants him to agree to her marrying his son Frederick. Kitty turns out to be a second self-rival, and in the end is revealed to be Emilia, a gentlewoman and not a maid at all. The two witty heroines not only control both their gallants but also manage to trick Sir Ephraim.

Besides these plots there is another more comical sub-plot involving two contrasting old maids, one negatively portrayed (Lady Camphire Lovebane) and one positively (Mrs. Fallow), who are ludicrously quarrelling with the cynical and misogynist bachelor Verjuice. Mrs. Fallow is one of the few positively depicted old maids of Restoration comedy. She is good-natured, lighthearted, and she has a sense of humour; as is perceived suitable for her age, the widow prefers to remain single.

Another character that is portrayed differently is Barnaby, colonel Bellamont's servant. In contrast to his master, who just drank his way through his university terms in taverns instead of attending to his studies, he is not only witty but learned and well-read.

Maria (*The Self-Rival*)

Maria is a conventional coquette who, together with Colonel Bellamont forms a truly cheerful and lively couple. Throughout the play she pretends to be the good daughter, feigning passive obedience to

her father. Even when he ventures to marry her off to an aged Lord, she acts to submit to his will, “I shall always prefer my Duty to my Inclinations: and if you command, “I’ll obey. [...] Sir, I am yours, and you may dispose of me as you please” (33).

Maria tests Colonel Bellamont extensively and presents herself as being cool and dismissive. As befits Bellamont’s profession, he, Maria and some other characters employ war language all through the play, for example when Maria considers her feelings for Bellamont: “[T]his Colonel runs strangely in my head; if he attacks again, I fear I shall give ground: for the most potent Adversary we Women can meet with, is an eloquent Tongue, and a plausible Temper” (5). In the face of her “enemy” she teasingly tells him “I’ll swear you are one of the most troublesome Men upon Earth. [...] If I were to be confin’d to one Man, I should think my Charms were withering, and stand Knee deep in Water all day to keep ‘em fresh” (8). Playing hard to get, she adds that she will at the earliest marry at thirty, “and then he that holds out longest shall have me” (8). Bellamont’s sharp reply is: “Till Thirty! why a Man might take Troy in less time. Egad Child, your Lovers had need to be Soldiers, and used to long Sieges” (8). In contrast to other gallants, Bellamont is not impressed by Maria’s affected coldness, which makes her act even more detached, “the Man has Wit enough; but I hate him because I can give him no pain: the Wretch is so very insolent, he makes me no manner of sport” (13).

In the presence of Mrs. Fallow, whom Maria esteems highly and whom she wants to please, she feigns coldness, asserting that she believes she shall resolve to live single just like Mrs. Fallow, for the “Thoughts of a Husband sets [sic] me a quaking like an Ague-Fit” (6). Maria has no sympathy for her feeble and complaining brother’s broken heart, mocking him by asking: “is this the Logick and Ethicks [...] you have been studying all this while? O Ged! how I could laugh at you now!” (17). She is another woman who reverses the gender roles, acting the manly part and exposing her sentimental brother as womanish: “[Y]our Offers are very powerful, almost too strong for a weak Woman to resist; but I have made a firm Resolution never to marry any Man, who will not first promise me to chastise the Insolence of a young saucy Lover I have. [...] I believe he’s but a Coward, tho’ he’s a Field-

Officer [...] he's no Almanzor, but plain Colonel Bellamont" (31). When Bellamont/ Lord Pastall hesitates to comply, protesting that Bellamont is his own nephew, Maria convinces him by asking: "do you desire to marry a young Woman? I think you ought to sacrifice every thing to my Inclination" (32). Quite enigmatically she adds, "tho' he's your Nephew, use him like your Rival; and believe his ill Treatment gives you a title to the best in my power" (32). Now Bellamont/ Lord Pastall finally complies.

These last lines are ambiguous, as Davys uses them to hint at the explanation of the title. Colonel Bellamont has to act like the rival of Lord Pastall. Almanzor is the impulsive hero of Dryden's heroic tragedy *The Conquest of Spain* (1670). and thus is his own self-rival. In this scene Maria is at her most dominant, first gaining strength through feigning weakness, and then displaying her strong will and determination, using virtually every trick to reach her ultimate goal. She is pleased with herself, and states: "for now I can mortify him as a young Man, and marry him as an old one; can oblige a resolute Father, and please myself too" (32).

Throughout the play Maria tries her best to prompt emotions from Bellamont by humiliating him, making him jealous, affecting coldness, displaying contempt for his occupation, or even chasing him away, but he is clever enough not to be fooled, which completely exasperates her, "O Ged! How it vexes me to see with what Indifference the Fellow bears all this? I think 'tis impossible to mortify him" (45). However, when she tells Bellamont that she will marry neither him nor Lord Pastall, Bellamont's aloof and smart retort "[t]hen there's a happy third Man you love better" (43) finally drives her up the wall and she explodes:

Lard you are so impertinent, I'll marry no body; here I am, a fine young Lady, have a good Fortune, and admired and address'd by every body, and you wou'd have me such a Fool as to leave all this Pleasure to be a Wife forsooth, to spend my Evenings at home with my Maids, making Patch-Work or mending my Husband's Night-Caps, whose coming I must patiently

expect till Midnight; and if he comes then, perhaps so fuddled, that I shou'd have but little Comfort in his Company" (44).

When Bellamont/ Lord Pastall eventually wants to let her into his plot, Maria uses the last bit of power she has over him and refuses to hear his secrets. Before he is able to disclose his secret to her, she again deceives the deceiver, telling her newly wed husband, Bellamont/ Lord Pastall: "I have a Concession to make as well as you, I hope you won't be angry with me, but I have made a Promise [...] that the first Night I lie with a different Sex from my own, it shall certainly be with Colonel Bellamont" as "he is the only Man upon Earth, I ever did or ever shall love" (57). She has finally achieved to amaze Bellamont and reveals her secret: "Lard, Colonel that you shou'd think me so short-sighted, as not to see thro' your Disguise all this while!" (58). They finally make peace with each other, and join forces to bring Sir Ephraim to their side. Maria again tries to reach this aim by feigning weakness, telling her father that she did not know anything about Bellamont's intrigue and that she has behaved like a truly obedient daughter by marrying Lord Pastall according to her father's wish and has thus earned his blessing. In the end, Sir Ephraim surrenders to both young women and promises both couples to provide for them. Maria's independence and strong will are best portrayed in her last lines of the first act: "And Woman's Will can never bear the Rein/ I'll have my Freedom, or I'll break my Chain" (15). She is a stubborn young woman and possibly one of the most resolute and strong-minded heroines of Restoration comedy. As an independent and capable woman always finding a way to attain her goal. Maria is matched with an equal, as Bellamont proves to be as tough as her. Like a man she can take care of herself and hold her own. This gay couple's witty banter, which often humorously employs war language, also symbolizes that love can be a hard battle to be fought, but as is known, all is fair in love and war.

Kitty/ Emilia (*The Self-Rival*)

Kitty acts as an active heroine and in fact is a gentlewoman who only disguises as a servant in order to conquer the man she loves. In the first act she briefly appears, ridiculing Lady Camphire together with her mistress Maria and later, when Sir Ephraim, whose head she has accidentally turned, pursues her. The old knight, struggling with his affections, starts wooing her, proposes to her, and bribes her with his money:

I know there is some Disparity in our Years, but you must balance that with your Family and want of Fortune: I shall very soon dispose of your Mistress; my Son, who will be here presently, intends to travel; and for my own Person, I design to bestow it upon you. (12)

Kitty wittily beats him with at his own game, reminding him of how he recently lectured his daughter that happiness does “not consist in the present Gratification of our Passions, but in a thoughtful Reflection upon Futurity” adding, “if she [Maria] at Eighteen must not indulge those Passions, sure you, who are in your grand Climacterick, should find it no hard matter to subdue ‘em” (13). Thus she successfully disengages herself from this awkward situation. Much later in the play, she reappears disguised as a gypsy, manipulating Sir Ephraim into sending his son away: “if you don’t make haste and send away your Son there, he will prove a dangerous Rival, and rob you of your Mistress” (34). Interestingly, there is a surprisingly high amount of truth in her threat. Next, also having seen through Colonel Bellamont’s disguise, she gives Maria the fright of her life: “[H]ere’s a Lord and a Soldier, whose Interests are so interwoven, that it is not possible for the Stars themselves to tell which they are most inclin’d to; you will marry both, yet have but one Husband, and with him be very happy “(35).

Davys’ use of cryptic language and obscure but entirely truthful messages delivered by the mysterious gypsy is really bewitching. Kitty in her guise as a gypsy performs one more trick: pulling out a snuff-box, she lets Frederick take one pinch of her snuff, and then reveals her, that is, Emilia’s picture to him. This scene is fairly sentimental, with effeminate Frederick indulging in lovesickness:

“Though lovely Likeness of a most beautiful Face to a more beauteous Mind! thou shalt along with me; and while Emilia lies incircled in a happy Husband’s Arms, (Oh Death to my Repose!) I’ll lay thee to my broken Heart, a senseless Witness of my Sighs and Tears! (36). This is almost too much for the ingenious gypsy, who “turns, and wipes her Eyes,” but having regained her composure, she tells Frederick, “Emilia is not married” and exposes Emilia’s brother’s deceit to him (36). Frederick once more proves his unmanliness, moaning, “[h]ad she the least intention to make me happy, she would doubtless e’er now have found some way to let me know” (36). This scene shows a reversal of gender roles with the emancipated and self-determined Emilia scheming in order to conquer the effeminate, passive and whining Frederick. Having vanished once more, Kitty/ Emilia returns in the last act, again disguised as a gypsy, pretending to come on an errand from Kitty. She wants Sir Ephraim, who longs for Kitty, to “grant her a small Request” (61), telling him that if he denied her, he would never see Kitty again. Again reversing the gender roles, she asks Sir Ephraim, “will you bestow your Son upon me?” and explains that “the worst Design I have upon him is to marry him” (61). When Sir Ephraim bewildered asks, “[m]arry him! to whom I beseech you?” she cheekily answers, “[t]o myself, Sir, I never court for nobody else” (61). Here Kitty/ Emilia herself indicates her reversal gender stereotypes.

Even though Kitty/ Emilia occupies less space in the play than most other characters, she fully dominates the scenes in which she is present, manipulating Sir Ephraim to act according to her will. Her double disguise is symbolic of her astuteness and wit. Nowhere in the play does she err from her ultimate goal and she does it without being a conventional coquette. Frederick a weak and effeminate man stands in clear contrast to this self-determined and capable woman.

Conventional Maid versus Good Humoured Maid

In *The Self-Rival*, Davys introduces a more humane and attractive portrayal of a good-natured old maid, whom she contrasts with a less likeable, more conventional affected old maid. Mrs. Fallow is a figure who cannot really be classified as a stereotypical stock character. Even though she is an old

maid, she is certainly not a humour-butt. Her presence and prominence in the play are remarkable and her plots with Barnaby, a clever servant, are quite unconventional. Mrs. Fallow is juxtaposed to Lady Camphire Lovebane, who is the embodiment of the stereotypical prudish old maid, a figure which is ridiculed by Maria, Frederick, and also by Mrs. Fallow. The other characters' hostility towards Lady Camphire is explicit right from the start, when Kitty, the alleged maid, says of her that she is "praying [...] for what will never be granted her," namely a husband, as "old Maids never pray for any thing else" (4). Maria, however, counters that "Lady *Camphire* has declaim'd so long against that frightful Creature, Man, that she could not for shame marry now" (4). The figure of Lady Camphire thus evokes laughter and animosity in the two young women. The prevailing hostility against amorous older women, who marry when their best years are already past, is also expressed by Mrs. Fallow, who finds fault in some:

Fulsome, a Woman of Fortune [...] whose only Charm is Sixteen Thousand Pounds; for tho' she has a deform'd Body, a Face scarce Human, and a Soul more despicable than either, there's not a Beau at Court, an Officer in the Guards, or a Merchant in the City, who does not constantly pay their Devoirs at her Levee (6).

Mrs. Fallow thus shares the common view that an older woman should not marry when she is past a certain age:

Woman who is once turn'd of Forty, and then puts herself under Covert Baron, in my opinion forfeits all Pretensions to Discretion; for if she marries a young Man, she's in the Decline of her Years, before he comes to the Prime of his; and what Comfort there is in an old one, daily Experience will tell us. (6)

Maria totally agrees with Mrs. Fallow that "an old Woman married to a young Man is a most ridiculous Sight" (7), and paints a cruel picture of an old coquette who appears in "publick dress'd in blush-colour'd Satin, and as airy as one of Sixteen, tho' her Head noddles like a piece of *German* Clock-Work, and her feeble Legs will scarce bear the Weight of her tottering Body" (7).

However, Mrs. Fallow, who throughout the play displays a fairly ambivalent attitude towards marriage, seems to regret never having been married herself, telling Maria, “when I was as young as you are, I had the very same Fancies, which you, and all young Ladies of Fortune have; was fond of my Power, and thought Submission a very strange thing, till Time stole on me unawares, and now ‘tis too late” (6). These lines again illustrate the prevailing perception of marriage as the total submission of a woman to a man, and they also emphasize the necessity for women who have no fortune at their disposal. According to Mrs. Fallow only “Ladies of Fortune” (6) have the power to choose whether they want to marry.

As has already been shown, this is a considerable distortion of reality and does not at all correspond to historical facts of the period. Actually, it does not really become explicit whether Mrs. Fallow is disillusioned, and therefore ridicules the concept of marriage as well as some married couples she knows, or if she simply disdains it, but tries to remain on secure ground, not daring to openly voice her socially unacceptable opinion. This could be an explanation for her stating that she “always [speaks] well of Matrimony” as she does not want to appear peevish, whereas Lady Camphire “pretends to hate the very name on’t ” (19). Mrs. Fallow speaks from experience when she tells Maria that if she intends to marry, she should do so while she is still young, in order to “avoid the odious Name of old Maid, which you see me “labour under” (7). She does not necessarily agree with Mary Astell’s notion that no wise woman would be afraid of the dreadful name of old maid (108). So, having lived to see what life is like for an old maid, Mrs. Fallow takes pride in her choice of staying single.

Maria conveys an entirely positive image of the old maid: “Where I sure to behave myself as well under that Denomination as you do, I would live single on purpose, for I have often thought you have brought *a new Character on the Stage* [emphasis added] of Life, and you are *certainly the first good-natur’d old Maid* [emphasis added] I ever saw” (7).

This is the most interesting passage of the play concerning the character of the good-natured old maid. Davys explicitly indicates that her intention actually is to introduce this new variant of the

character to the English stage. A widow herself, she also lived to see what life was like for single women. By employing a new, entirely positively portrayed figure like Mrs. Fallow, juxtaposed to a stereotypical prudish old maid, Davys lends her play much more realism and credence, giving voice to her dissatisfaction and frustration not only with the portrayal of old maids in the drama of the period, but also with their social status and public treatment in real life.

Throughout the play, Mrs. Fallow acts like a reasonable, trustworthy, and honest woman, who in contrast to Lady Camphire does not at all display “Affectation and Ill-Nature,” the “Qualities [which are] the constant Attendants of [...] old Maids” (19). Even though the two women must be of more or less the same age, Mrs. Fallow has a youthful temper, while old-fashioned and withered Lady Camphire holds only completely outdated views. Mrs. Fallow is an integrated part of Maria’s and Frederick’s lives and joins forces with them in vexing their prudish old aunt, who cannot understand how Maria can “desire a Man’s Company upon any Terms?” (20). Regarding this topic of conversation as “so filthy a Subject,” she adds, “how sweet Lives did the Amazons lead? a whole Nation of Women, govern’d by their own Laws! Oh happy People! that there were such a state now!” (20). Lady Camphire then goes on to voice her utterly unromantic and sober estimation of love-making as a pure performance of duty, “since Nature has been so improvident, as to provide no other way of propagating out Species, ‘tis a Duty incumbent to us all” (20). Like Lady Greasy in *The Northern Heiress*, Lady Camphire is also a hybrid of the old maid and the young coquette, boasting, “[h]ow many Men of Quality have I had at my feet, whom I did not regard!” (21) and “I have refused the best Matches in the Kingdom” (38). Maria, though, under her breath tells Mrs. Fallow that according to her mother Lady Camphire “was never ask’d to marry in her Life; but was so fond, that if she had not been strictly watch’d, she had run away with the Butler” (21).

After this brief excursion to her coquettish youth, Lady Camphire immediately regains her own proudly prudish self, ridiculously bragging: “I never spoke to a Man, unless my Father, till I was turn’d of Two-andtwenty: the Gentlemen who used to visit at our House, always call’d me the inaccessible

Lady” (21). She even adds that if she got parliamentary consent, she would “build a Nunnery [herself], and settle [her] whole Fortune upon it” (21). All the other characters of the play regard Lady Camphire with contempt and declare her as “stark mad!” (22). She also pesters others with her lengthy and boring family tales and her moral sermonizing.

In one of the sub-plots, Mrs. Fallow fights a battle against “the filthy Beast” (5) Verjuice, which in the course of the play shifts from a purely verbal dispute to a more violent conflict. Their argument and Mrs. Fallow’s consequent plots of revenge display her humorous, intriguing, and still youthful spirit. Verjuice is a wicked old bachelor who trusts nobody but his only friend, money. Throughout his presence in the play, he is constantly abusing and insulting Lady Camphire, “a Person with no more Charms than a Skeleton” (38) and Mrs. Fallow, “I know you can outdo me in scolding; for your Tongue is as nimble as the Fingers of a *German* Artists, and as loud as the new Clock at St. *Paul’s* ” (38). Mrs. Fallow, though, is vastly superior to him not only in language, as is shown in the following scene, but also in deeds: “ Where there’s neither Wit enough to say things entertaining, or Goodnature enough to keep a Man within the Bounds of good Manners, I think one may venture to despise such a Person” (38).

After Mrs. Fallow has successfully beaten Verjuice with his own weapon in a duel of words, he has to admit, “[a] pox o’ your tart Tongue, it has set my Teeth on edge,” and Mrs. Fallow victoriously exclaims: “*Victoria! Victoria!*” (39). However, even though she has won the battle, for Mrs. Fallow the war is not over yet. With the aid of Colonel Bellamont’s bright servant Barnaby, who owns Verjuice “a Grudge upon [his] own account” (42), she contrives a successful revenge plot. Her superiority over Verjuice is again displayed when she overhears his counter-revenge plot: ” As Verjuice thinks “a Woman’s Tongue shou’d be used like a House on Fire, ply it with Water till the Flames are quenched,” he tries to bribe Barnaby, into “ducking [Mrs Fallow] for scolding [which] has been a Custom long in Use ” (55). While Verjuice is still gloatingly rubbing his hands and telling himself: “what noble Sport ‘twill be to see her nice Ladyship, dabbling, and like a Statue on a Fountain, throwing the Water on all

sides of her. Ha, ha, ha!” (55), Mrs. Fallow decides that, “there is some Return due to his Design” as “his Crime shall be his Punishment” (56). Again with Barnaby’s help, she lures Verjuice into a gaming-house, where the greedy scoundrel loses four hundred pounds he was going to put into the bank. Mrs. Fallow here employs a device typical of Restoration comedy, namely deceiving the deceiver. At the end of the play, Mrs. Fallow ventures even further by humorously patronizing and lecturing Verjuice, “Mr. *Verjuice*, I wou’d fain give you a little good Advice before we part, tho’ you know you don’t deserve it from me; wou’d you avoid all future Misfortunes, lay aside your Cynical Humour, use other People well, and it will be a certain means to make the use you so ” (67).

Colonel Bellamont supports her advice, whereas Verjuice reacts in the same obnoxious manner as ever and stamps away cursing: “Damn her Advice, an infernal Fury; may Plague, Pox and Poverty light upon you all, and a double Portion upon her” (67). His inability to reform is symbolical of his low status as a humour-butt. Throughout the play, Mrs. Fallow has been superior to him in every way, which is quite remarkable, as her social standing as an old maid is conventionally inferior to his as an old bachelor. In addition to her victory in the battle of the sexes, Mrs. Fallow also thoroughly defeats Lady Camphire, introducing an entirely positive version of an outdated, stereotypical stock character. Frederick felicitously puts the stark contrast between the two old maids into a nutshell: “[t]he worst-match’d Pair in Christendom; one all Good- Humour, Ease, and Freedom; t’other all Ill-Nature, Pride, and Affectation” (23).

Davys thus exposes social as well as gender prejudices, raising a traditional female character of contempt and humour above a male character, who has not the slightest chance to match her. She managed to successfully introduce an entirely different view of the unmarried woman by inventing the innovative Mrs. Fallow, a good-natured, humane, and attractive old maid.

Barnaby, Crafty Servant and Feminine Enactment

Barnaby is an intriguing character in *The Self-Rival*. He is more well-read than his own master, Colonel Bellamont. When Bellamont is astonished at Barnaby's ability to quote poetry, the servant wittily explains: "Aye, Sir, you may please to remember, when we were at *Cambridge* how differently we spent our time; while you were at the *Tuns* over your Bottle, I was in your Study over your Books" (27). Colonel Bellamont's reply: "[y]our most humble Servant, Sir! I would have you turn Poet!" then perfects the reversal of social roles" (27). As already mentioned in the discussion of Mrs. Fallow, clever Barnaby aids her in her plots against old Verjuice, after making sure that this does not incriminate his master like a truly faithful servant. He remarks: "ad-zucks my Fingers itch already to be at him" (41).

He is one of the actively scheming servants, not simply carrying out orders as was usual in English drama of that period. For example he assures Mrs. Fallow, "[l]eave the rest to me, Madam, I shall easily pick a Quarrel with him, and then Discipline's the Word; by Jove I'll give him enough to-day to serve him tomorrow too, unless he loves Beating as well as Mischief of Money"(42). After having implemented their plan, he relates to Mrs. Fallow what happened: disguised in a dress of Mrs. Fallow's maid, he told Verjuice that he had a money-concern with him and lured him to the summer-house, where he locked the door: "upon which he grew pale, tho' I believe it was rather fear of Ravishment than Chastisement" (49). Barnaby in disguise led Verjuice to believe that "he had got me with Child, and I expected a Maintenance for it and myself" (49). When Verjuice in shock called Barnaby "a thousand hobbling Bitches and two-handed Whores, threatened [him] with the Stocks, Bridewell, and a Cart's Tail," Barnaby returned all this "with the kind Salutes of my Cudgel, till I made him as patient as a suffering Martyr" (49). In this scene, Verjuice is the typical humour-butt who is physically humiliated and chastised by a servant, that is, someone who is supposed to be his social inferior. Even adding to the grotesque nature of this scene is the fact that Barnaby mortifies Verjuice in

female disguise. In this context, this scene is another striking instance of a socially inferior woman outclassing her double superior.

While the employment of mistaken identity, masking and disguises is ubiquitous for the period, it is usually women who disguise themselves as men or men who disguise as their male social betters, in order to gain more independence and to transgress social and gender boundaries. However, it is unconventional to feature a man disguised as a humble woman and then have this totally grotesque figure thrash the humour-butt. The reversals of social and gender roles in this scene are quite vertiginous. As mentioned before, Mrs. Fallow and Barnaby, again in the guise of a maid, manage to trick Verjuice a second time.

During the rest of the play, Barnaby acts as a cheeky and witty servant, being once called “a very talkative impertinent Puppy” by Verjuice (55), who is ignorant of the fact that it was Barnaby in disguise who cruelly tricked him twice. When the old miser Verjuice tries to persuade him to help him duck Mrs. Fallow in the horse-pond, and when he offers Barnaby a mere tip of one shilling, the servant saucily replies: “Oh dear, Sir! ‘Tis too much in Reason, if you please I’ll give you Change” (55).

One last interesting detail concerning the character of Barnaby as well as that of Mrs. Fallow is their treatment of each other as well as how they are treated by the other characters in the play. Barnaby and Mrs. Fallow, social and sexual inferiors, plot and scheme as equals. Even though the original stock characters, they are derived from, are usually subordinate to most of the other characters in a play, they distinguish themselves from the traditional stock figures, such as, Verjuice and Lady Camphire, thus rising above them. Not once are Barnaby and Mrs. Fallow figures of fun or contempt, but they are always treated kindly and equally by the other characters, who collaborate with them and involve them in their plots. These two supposedly minor characters take up unusually much space in the play and when scheming together are often alone on the stage in ‘all-socially inferior character scenes.’ They also prominently contrive plots with other characters, which again contributes to their elevated standing in the play.

Chapter IV Other Female Playwrights

Introduction

In this chapter the works of Susanna Centlivre, Eliza Haywood, and Mary Pix are described with a focus on Centlivre's *The Busie Body* (1709), Haywood's *A Wife to be Let* (1723), and Pix's *The Beau Defeated, or the Lucky Younger Brother* (1700). These plays will be discussed in relation to Mary Davys' two plays, *The Northern Heiress* (1716) and *The Self Rival* (1725). Information about their lives can be found in appendices D, E, and F.

Susanna Centlivre's (c. 1669-1723) *The Busie Body* (1709)

The Busie Body was staged 475 times in the London theatres from its première at Drury Lane in 1709 until its final performance at Covent Garden, on 7 June 1800. As was common in Centlivre's time, women writing were frowned upon, and as a result her work was mostly subject to harsh criticism, but there were also positive comments. Fredrick Lock states that, "Plot, Humour, Business" is a good characterization of the main sources of her comedy, and of course the plot is to involve love intrigues" (27). Robert Hume is rather critical when he states that the result of Centlivre's interlacing of several sources is "an effective vehicle for a theatrical romp, but no one has ever found much literary value in it" (Development 116). Bonamy Dobrée's comment is even more harsh, reviewing the play as an "empty comedy of intrigue, without any reality of emotion whatsoever" (English Literature 236). Frederick Bateson on the other hand is positive about the character of Marplot (70) and Allardyce Nicoll regards the play as "one of the masterpieces [of the] comedy of intrigue" (167).

According to Hume (Development 485), Centlivre's *The Busie Body* (1709) can be seen as the representative of the mainstream of Augustan comedy. He claims it possesses the form but not the

spirit of Carolean comedy and its plot and humours are substantial. Augustan comedy consists mostly of routine, formulaic plays written by “cautious professionals” like Cibber, Centlivre, and Johnson, who are “traumatized by theatrical disintegration” and “fear failure more than they hope for success” (Development 486).

The Busie Body is a comedy set in Lisbon and stages a vivid hero paired with a vivacious heroine (Sir George Airy and Miranda) besides a calmer heroine paired with a more serious hero (Isabinda and Charles Gripe). Sir George Airy wants to marry Miranda but her guardian, Sir Francis Gripe, intends her for himself. Sir Francis’s son Charles, a friend of Sir George’s, wants to marry Isabinda but her father, Sir Jealous Traffick, has intended his daughter for a Spanish merchant. The essence of the play is to outwit father and guardian.

The characters differ in such a way that Sir George is wealthy but in doubt about Miranda’s love for him, while Charles is poor but certain of Isabinda’s love. Miranda is financially dependent on her guardian but has some freedom of movement, while Isabinda is basically imprisoned by her father. Miranda is a dynamic and independent heroine who is pursued by Sir George, whereas Isabinda is more demure and compliant, hoping to be rescued by Charles. Marplot, another of Sir Francis’s wards, goes out of his way to help the young lovers, but being the “busybody” of the title, his clumsy, well-meant interference only make matters worse. With the ludicrous, humorous and exaggerated character Marplot, Centlivre has added a unique comical central character as the focus of the action. Besides the unhelpful assistance of Marplot, the two couples are helped by their servants, Patch (maid to Isabinda) and Whisper (Charles’s servant). In order to obtain control of her estate, Miranda feigns to be in love with her guardian, Sir Francis. At the same time she turns Sir George’s head, flirting with him in disguise. Later, Marplot delivers a coded message to Sir George, who interprets it correctly as an invitation to a rendezvous. However, Sir Francis’s unanticipated return calls off their date, with Marplot almost betraying them unwittingly in the famous “monkey scene”. In this scene Sir George’s humiliation reaches its climax when, to avoid being discovered by Sir Francis, he hides himself behind

the chimney-board, and passes off as a wild monkey. Miranda uses Sir George for her entertainment, stating that the “monkey” will be tamed and chained very soon, implying their future marriage.

Marplot, being the fool he is, believes there is an actual monkey in the chimney- board, asserts he can tame the animal, while at the same time revealing Sir George (Act Four 58-59). In the end Miranda is able to convince her guardian she will marry him and thus cons the deeds for her estates out of him on their supposed wedding day. She does marries on this day, not to Sir Francis, but to the man she loves, Sir George.

In the second plotline, Isabinda is more or less confined to the home of her father Sir Jealous, a merchant who adopted some typical Spanish customs. He has arranged for her to marry a Spanish merchant. Charles and Isabinda attempt to meet in secret and are helped by Isabinda’s clever maid Patch, but their plans are messed up both by Marplot’s interfering and by Sir Jealous’s diligence. In the end, Charles disguises as the Spanish merchant, and assisted by the other couple, succeeds in marrying Isabinda although not without some difficulty. Sir Jealous finally accepts the marriage, but Sir Francis persists in his refusal of the marriage between Miranda and Sir George.

Both Mary Davys and Susanna Centlivre were respectable women and widows who wrote imaginative and funny comedies. Centlivre became connected with the court through her marriage, and did not have to write to earn a living. Davys, as the widow of a clergyman, chose to remain single, and had to sustain herself and mainly relied on her writing as a source of income. While Centlivre was quite successful and popular with the theatre audience for many decades, early critics such as Lock, Bowyer, Bateson, and Frushell all regard Centlivre’s desire and primary aim, “to entertain her contemporaries,” as her main flaw (Lock 132). Davys’ performed comedy *The Northern Heiress* only managed to go through three nights after which Davys and her work vanished into oblivion till the early twentieth century. The Dublin University Magazine of 1855 published a brief though erroneous summary of her career which closes with what Bowden calls Davys’ “literary epitaph”: “She appears to have enjoyed some literary reputation in her day although now totally forgotten” (Mary Davys 31).

Bowden also notes that between the eighteenth-century reprints of *The Reform'd Coquet* and *The Accomplish'd Rake* and the 1950s, Davys was “a mere footnote in Swift’s works” (Mary Davys 35).

Centlivre was a prolific writer of drama and mastered the art of borrowing and interweaving given plots. Farquhar explains in his preface to *The Twin Rivals* (1703) that a “play without a beau, cully, cuckold, or coquette is as poor an entertainment to some palates, as their Sunday’s dinner would be without beef and pudding ” (82). In that way stock types are the basic ingredients for any solid play; to reinterpret them and weave them into entertaining plots is a tremendous achievement and shows the playwright’s talent and accomplishment. Bateson, praised Centlivre's ability to write to the taste of her audience, but also suggested that her plays were commercially rather than artistically successful (61-77). Davys, on the other hand, was more interested in writing fiction, especially novellas, epistolary novels, and autobiographical narratives. She was more innovative and self-confident in creating new plots and characters. Centlivre’s social standing was better than Davys’ and she was a more prolific dramatist, but her plays and character portrayal are more conventional than Davys’.

The dramatic works of Centlivre and Davys have a unmistakable charm and distinguish themselves from the works of men. Their humour is not as harsh and bitter as that of male dramatists, and generally not at the expense of weak characters (Lock 63-77). Foolish and unsteady characters largely receive a more compassionate treatment from women writers, who stage them as more complex versions of the old stock characters. Centlivre and Davys seem to have understood the audience’s taste, and were also aware of their delicate position as female dramatists (Hume, Development 24-28). Being aware of their position and limitations they chose to voice their feminist views more covertly than overtly. They give socially inferior characters, who were generally mocked and ridiculed, a voice, and treated them more sympathetic. The virtuous heroines, usually portrayed as well adjusted and complying, are presented by Centlivre and Davys as energetic, strong-willed, and independent virtuous heroines. As such these virtuous heroines attempt to achieve an equal place in a male dominated society through worldly knowledge and wit. The basic plot revolves around one or

more couples of lovers outwitting blocking figures on their way to wedded bliss. There are two ways to achieve this wedded bliss, either the man has to conquer the woman, or the woman has to reform and tame the man. Normally the couple of the main plot is a happy, outgoing couple, while couples in subplots tend to be more serious. For example, in *The Busie Body* we meet Sir George Airy and Miranda as the gay couple, and Charles and Isabinda as the more quiet, serious couple of the sub-plot. In Davys' *The Self-Rival* Maria and Colonel Bellamont are the strong gay couple, but the play also portrays an atypical sub-plot couple Kitty/ Emilia, a scheming maid/ virtuous heroine who successfully pursues a weak and effeminate gallant. Frederick. Gamont and Isabella in *The Northern Heiress* form a more peculiar gay couple. Cynical Isabella cannot stop testing Gamont's sincerity, and true love for her and Gamont's love runs actually not "so high as she expects," as her maid Liddy wisely puts it (38). He is indecisive and at best as interested in her estate as he is in her person.

To reach their ultimate goal, a favourable marriage with the man they love, the heroines in *The Busie Body*, *The Northern Heiress*, and *The Self-Rival* take their lives into their own hands. To achieve this they manipulate their suitors, fathers, and guardians. Although the heroines by reaching their goal become again subject to male dominance they show through their characters that women do have a voice, and are able to think and fend for themselves. This was in contrast with the actual circumstances of Restoration England, in which women had no status and say, but were entirely dependent on the men in their lives: their fathers, guardians, and husbands. The virtuous heroines of Restoration drama typically reject financial arrangements made by a father or guardian as the basis for their marriage. Authors such as Centlivre and Davys were surely ahead of their time in their social criticisms, even they were subject to harsh criticism, and had little influence on society as such.

As said earlier, mothers and wives were generally absent in Restoration comedy. *The Busie Body* contains not a single mother for its four young lovers, neither does *The Self-Rival*. Another remarkable fact is that few plays deal with the aristocratic society like lords and knights. If they are portrayed they are mainly ridiculed (such as Sir Francis Gripe in *The Busie Body* or Sir Jeffrey in *The*

Northern Heiress). Lower-class characters in Restoration drama such as male and female domestic servants are consistently staged and range from stupid, or foolish to clever, witty, or scheming. Patch and Scentwell in *The Busie Body*, Liddy in *The Northern Heiress*, and Kitty in *The Self-Rival* are scheming maids. Barnaby in *The Self-Rival* is a clever, actively scheming servant, whereas Whisper in *The Busie Body* is a faithful servant who just carries out his master's orders. The servant figure develops in English drama from a mere figure taking orders to a more complex character with intelligence and their own devices. For example, Scentwell in *The Busie Body* is simply carrying out orders at the beginning, but like Patch also develops intrigues himself.

Women in *The Busie Body*

In *The Busie Body*, women of all sorts — from the young maids up to the old matron — are in control. There is little doubt that the women in the play are able to think independently, and with a creative intelligence — qualities that were traditionally reserved for men. Charles, for example is saved by Isabinda's clever and loyal maid Patch when his plan to marry Isabinda is about to be unravelled. With her quick thinking the situation is saved. Charles is clearly amazed by her cunning manoeuvres and states: "My better Genius, thou hast revived my drooping Soul" (Act IV 54). As the vivacious heroine of the play, Miranda not only has to find mister Right for herself and her friend Isabinda, she also has to plot against the chosen future spouses by their guardians, and establish a financial healthy future for them both. In Act II, scene 2, Sir Jealous is quite taken back by his charges intelligence when he exclaims: "Say you so, Mistress, who the Devil taught you the Art of Reasoning?"

When Miranda hears from Patch of the moral codes Sir Jealous wants to impose on his daughter Isabinda she laughingly replies: --"Suppose he could introduce his rigid Rules--does he think we cou'd not match them in Contrivance? No, no; Let the Tyrant Man make what Laws he will, if there's a Woman under the Government, I warrant she finds a way to break 'em: (Act I 8). Miranda shows that although men are believed to have all the power, in the end women are able to gain control.

When Charles secretly meets her at her home she concludes: “Come, come, Charles, I fear if I consult my Reason, Confinement and Plenty is better than Liberty and Starving” and that Love, “rarely dwells with Poverty”(Act III, scene 1). Isabinda openly defies her father when she clearly states: “Sir, ‘tis not the restraint, but the innate principles, secures the reputation and honour of our sex.- Let me tell you, sir, confinement sharpens the invention, as want of sight strengthens the other senses, and is often more pernicious than the recreation innocent liberty allows” (Act II 25).

As with Miranda, the economical side of a favourable marriage is an important issue in finding the right husband. Miranda states that: “for our Time's but short, and we must fall into Business: Do you think we can agree on that same terrible Bugbear, *Matrimony*, without heartily Repenting on both sides” (Act IV 56) when George wants to woo her. Later on Miranda shows her skills when she tricks Sir Francis in signing a document that will allow her to marry as she chooses: “Therefore when you sign an Authentick Paper, drawn up by an able Lawyer, that I have your Leave to marry, the next Day makes me yours, *Gardee*”(Act III 37), and explains her choice: “the malicious World will be apt to say, you trick'd me into Marriage, and so take the Merit from my Choice. Now I will have the Act my own, to let the idle Fops see how much I prefer a Man loaded with Years and Wisdom”(Act III 37).

Sonia Villegas Lòpez states that “The success of the daughters’ initiatives is built upon the first signs of a proto-feminist discourse, as the result of the creation of relational bonds among women,” (143). Lopez explains that from the start Miranda and Isabinda are confronted by the same predicament. Miranda chooses to defend Isabinda’s interests as she sends her maid Patch to Sir jealous House to help her escape her father’s vigilance. In this way Miranda, Isabinda and Patch form an alliance in which they support one another in order to reach their goals. This female bonding serves the purpose of controlling their situation and make them more powerful (Lopez 143). Patsy Fowler claims that Centlivre satirizes the conventional social behaviours of both genders, by giving predominantly male attributes to female characters thus expanding the realm of accepted conduct for women (49). The two lead female characters actively resist their guardians and scheme with rhetoric and plots to

alter their circumstances. Miranda cleverly outwits Sir Francis with her words when she makes him sign the document, and with her silence she controls George when he offered her guardian money to be able to speak to her. Miranda distinctly expresses how it must feel to be forced to marry an older man when she describes Sir Francis, “What a delicate bedfellow I should have!” (Act III 36). Fowler states that Miranda uses her mastery of masculine language to pursue and attain her goal (49). In the fourth act Miranda's control of her situation is again portrayed when she suggests: “Do you think we can agree on that same terrible bugbear, Matrimony, without heartily repenting on both sides?” (56). In the same scene when Sir George wants to marry immediately, she sharply replies, “Hold, not so fast, I have provided better than to venture on dangerous experiments headlong” (56).

Miranda, Isabinda and Patch display their intellectual capabilities as women, establishing that they are able to reason, and as such are capable to govern their own lives (Fowler 50). Even after the marriage will have taken place, Miranda suggests that her control will continue when she answers Marplot's erroneous question about whether the hiding monkey (Sir George) has a chain: “Not yet, but I design it one that shall last its lifetime” (Act IV 58).

Marplot, or the Busie Body

The role of Marplot, who Bateson called: “one of the most attractive of literature’s simpletons” (70), was so popular with the actors and the audience that Centlivre was compelled to write a sequel about him. Although he is depicted as a silly, but highly inquisitive fellow, the audience can not help but regard him with affection. Centlivre treats his character in a milder fashion than was custom in Restoration plays. Furthermore, he does display some rather effeminate characteristics: he is cowardly, loves gossip, and fusses over little animals (Pearson 210).

In the first scene, when Marplot makes his first appearance, Charles describes his “Beautiful Countenance” to his friend George. Further on in the same scene Charles warns his friend that Marplot

has a: “passionate Desire to kiss your Hand” which might suggest that Marplot favours men above women. Throughout the play Marplot shows no signs that he is interested in the opposite sex, or the same sex for that matter. His ignorance and foolishness cause the disruption of the plots of his friends which leads to Miranda observing: “you converse but little with our sex” (Act IV 61). As such Centlivre shows through the character of Marplot that gender roles can be reversed.

Eliza Haywood’s (c. 1693- 1756) *A Wife to be Lett* (1723)

Haywood’s only comedy *A Wife to be Lett* (1723) staged at the Theatre Royal at Drury Lane three times, is said to have been successful due to the public who wanted to see the author, who performed the part of the wife, Mrs. Graspall. Mrs Graspall was said to be well suited to Haywood’s merry disposition. The play is described by Margarete Rubik as a sentimental comedy, highly didactic, and moralizing (131). Rubik also states that Haywood’s plays only display covert feminist views, but that her novels reveal very different images of courageous, strong, and resolute women (131).

The play follows three interrelated romance plots: both Marilla and Celemena are young women betrothed to undesirable men, and Mrs. Graspall, though married to an old miser (Mr. Graspall), is pursued by Sir Harry Beaumont, an engaging gentleman. The significant twist in the plot (as mentioned in her epilogue) is that Mr. Graspall pimps his wife for a large sum of money, letting Beaumont have free run of his home,... and wife. In the subplot the two servants trick an eager to be married widow. Essential to the play is the fact that through disguise characters are able to express themselves more explicit and freely. Mary Anne Schofield states that: “[b]y choosing disguises antithetic to their actual nature, masqueraders could act out repressed fantasies, could become an "other." The world of the masquerade, then, is one of metamorphosis and transformation” (Introduction to Masquerade Novels 31).

Although Schofield mainly refers to Haywood's novels it was certainly a feature Haywood also used in her other work. In the play several character chose to disguise themselves in order to be able to obtain information or achieve their goals.

Amadea, who comes from a worthy family, appears in the first scene dressed as a boy, she seeks the company of Mrs. Graspall with the purpose to gain information about her intentions regarding Sir Harry Beaumont. Previously Amadea was close to Sir Harry Beaumont until he left suddenly for the country. In her disguise Amadea is able to gain access to various homes more easily, can give advice as a man, and criticise women's conduct. She does all this to uncover the intentions of Sir Harry Beaumont,--- "you cannot wonder I took all Opportunities to dive into the Secret of his coming hither—" (Act. III 48). She reveals herself to Mrs. Graspall and Sir Harry Beaumont in act three but disguises herself again to allow Mrs. Graspall to teach her husband a lesson.

Jenny Dogood, housekeeper to the Widow Stately has changed her name and her appearance to start anew in the country. She assists Shamble, whom she knows from the city, in his effort to pursue the Widow, and aids Captain Gaylove in his scheme. Shamble does not recognize her at first and exclaims: "—how was it possible to know thee thus metamorphos'd I fine Lace Pinners, fine Lace Pinners tranfmogrify'd into a round- ear'd Coif and a high-crown'd Hat—a Gold Watch into a Pincushion, and a Tweezer into a Scissar Case—" (Act I 11). Shamble, a footman disguises as a knight to be able to woo the Widow. As such Haywood shows us that the lower class is certainly able to act rationally and creatively to achieve goals for themselves and others.

Trickery and scheming among the upper class is mainly executed by the two gentlemen, Courtly and Gaylove, where Gaylove takes the lead. The women are, apart from some minor resistance, and Amadea's disguise, obedient and virtuous. In the end, as is expected of a Restoration comedy, rakes are reformed and lovers are married.

Mary Pix's (1666- 1709) *The Beau Defeated*

In *The Beau Defeated* Pix applies the motif of a woman testing her suitor. For Pix, a rake is an unacceptable partner for her heroine, a young widow. Instead of letting the rake repent abruptly and unconvincingly at the end of the play, she chooses to portray a consistently virtuous hero who has a reputation for modesty and chastity, thus employing an interesting role reversal. The play's ending commends British merchants and can thus be regarded as an early forerunner of Whig plays re-appraising the role of the middle class. Pix's sympathetic female characters and the typical reversal of the gendering of comic stock plots became the model for many other female dramatists, especially for her friend and protégée Susanna Centlivre (Rubik 75- 81, Staves 114- 117).

The Beau Defeated tells how Mrs. Rich, a rich widow of the bourgeoisie, wants to marry an upper class mate to get "quality and a great name" (Act I 2). Mr. Rich, her brother-in-law, plots, together with Betty, Lady Landsworth and Mrs. Clerimont, how to marry her to an appropriate mate. Meanwhile, Mrs. Rich has time enough to make friends with a group of gamblers and to fall in love with Sir John Roverhead, a man who also courts Mrs Rich's niece, Lucinda. Lucinda, influenced by her aunt's acts, tries to elope with Lord Fourbind, Sir John in disguise. In the end, when both disasters have been averted, Mrs. Clerimont and Lady Landsworth finally help Mrs Rich to marry Elder Clerimont, a simple squire looking for a wife, yet an appropriate upper-class mate. Besides, they also get married with their chosen mates (García135).

Allie Faden asserts that Pix's play focuses on the ability of the woman to acquire a mate through the use of high financial standing, and in some instances allows common people to acquire titles through marriage (30). Throughout *The Beau Defeated* Pix consistently shows that socio-economics play a much larger role in the process of selecting a spouse than love does, in particular through the character of Mrs. Rich. James Evans even claims that the play is filled with a stunning role reversal regarding the machinations of men and women to secure a healthy financial future and self-determination through the use of mate selection and formal marriage (15-33). Whether this proves to

be the case is debatable although it is significant that Pix focuses on how women can acquire a more desirable partner instead of focussing on the men, as was more common. Mrs. Rich is the leading lady in *The Beau Defeated* and clearly focussed on improving her status with the aid of her fortune. As her fortune is controlled by her in-laws this proves not an easy task. Furthermore Mrs. Rich proves to be rather gullible, and totally oblivious to the scheming around her. Her maid Betty, though disapproving of her Lady's objective is loyal and supporting, and proves to be more intelligent than Mrs. Rich. Betty's feelings towards her mistress are clear when she says, "Well, well, madam, you have no great reason to complain; and though you are not as yet a woman of quality, you are at least very rich; and you know, that with money you may buy quality, but birth very often brings no estate" (Act I 2).

Garcia focuses on the solidarity amongst women in the play and the need for education. She claims that women are able to achieve a better status and spouse if they help each other in a society that is against them (135). Mrs. Rich is supported by Lady Landsworth, Mrs. Clerimont and Betty, although not overly fond of her, and scheme against her, presumably to further Mrs. Riche's chances. Lady Landsworth expresses her opinion of Mrs. Rich throughout the play:-- "Ha, ha, ha. Her pride and self-opinion makes her follies unpitied. I'd fain be rid of the nauseous conversation this house abounds with" (Act I 6). In that way Garcia asserts that Pix subverts the traditional female stereotypes where women are mainly jealous of one another and only fend for themselves (137). On the other hand Lady Basset, and Mrs. Trickwell are clearly portrayed as the traditional female stereotypes, not only in it for themselves but also deceitful as to their status and upbringing. Betty describes them, "Indeed, my City Lady turning courtier has a hopeful flock of teachers: mistresses grown old, and then forsaken, who, in the tatters of their prosperity, pass upon her for decayed quality" (Act I 6). Maybe they are portrayed to show that both types of women exist in everyday life or to highlight the contrast between the them.

Education is another way to gain knowledge, solidarity and the possibility for women to achieve their goals. Garcia states that education is fundamental and should last a life time in order to avoid deviation from the desired path (138). Lucinda is a clear example of a young women in need of

education. She wants to elope not for love but to gain more freedom: —“ I run away only for more pleasure, more liberty” (Act V 74). Mrs. Rich proves to be a bad role model when she states that: “My niece, and I, will the example lead, Teach city-dames the way to mend their breed, choose for ourselves; let our dull parents pray; Devoutly cheat; each other’s lives betray: And whilst they drudge, we’ll briskly throw away”(Act III 46). Later on in the play, after disaster has been averted and Mrs. Rich is married, Lucinda realizes that marriage does not lead to more freedom, and thus is able to change her ways, led by example.

All that is said here seems to support the fact that *The Beau Defeated* breaks with tradition, but in the end women still marry and thus lose their autonomy. Furthermore it is clear that through all the scheming we are to understand that it is not wise or appropriate to marry above one’s social position and class. In the end a man, Mr. Rich has the last say and addresses the women with his moral statement: “Now, sister, and daughter, to you chiefly speak, let this day’s adventure make ye forever cautious of your conversation; you see how near these pretenders to quality had brought you to ruin” (Act V 87-88).

Conclusion

In order to compare the plays written by Davys, Centlivre, Haywood, and Pix, this thesis has studied; the setting; the opening and the ending of the play; who is in control; the level of solidarity and equality between women; the treatment of characters; the importance of money and marriage; gender inversion, and the use of masculine language.

According to McBurney, Schofield, and others Davys was innovative in setting her most successful play *The Northern Heiress* (1716) in the country. Centlivre's play *The Busie Body*, written in 1709, is set in Lisbon, and Davys could have followed her example in setting her play outside London. Davys' play *The Self Rival*, written in 1725, is conventionally set in London, which might indicate that Davys became more traditional and congruous with her time, as she grew older.

Haywood's play *A Wife to be Let* (1723) is set in Salisbury which might indicate that she knew Davys or her work and therefore choose a setting outside London. Mary Pix wrote her play *The Beau Defeated* in 1700, sixteen years before Davys wrote *The Northern Heiress*, and is traditionally set in London. As such, the conclusion that Davys was innovative in regards to the setting of her plays, is not all that clear-cut. McBurney states that Davys: "has been praised for standing out against the popular drama of the time, introducing a positive rural setting and rural characters with their funny accents, in a time when the London setting, which her plays depict as negative, was still the measure of all things" (348- 349). Although Centlivre's *The Busie Body*, and Haywood's *A Wife to be Let* are both set outside London, the setting is not quite rural, and as such Davys might be seen as innovative.

The only play that features a women speaking in the first act is Pix's *The Beau Defeated*, although *The Self Rival* stages father and daughter at the same time. All five plays have a man delivering their views at the end of the play indicating that men still have the last say. In that regard none of the female writers venture to change Restoration Comedy convention.

In *The Northern Heiress* the women are most in control and use logic to achieve their goals.

One may conclude that, although women scheme against, and test their prospective partners in various ways throughout the five plays, they all end in marriage. In this respect Davys, Centlivre, Haywood, and Pix follow Restoration Comedy traditions, and the conventions of their time where marriage is the desired goal and women, as a consequence, give up their rights.

Apart from Pix's *The Beau Defeated* women from all classes show an unusual solidarity, and a devotion to aid their 'sisters' in achieving their goals. In Restoration Comedy women rivalry and jealousy were more common. Besides solidarity there seems to be an equality between the upper class women and their female servants, the latter being usually portrayed in a less favourable and more ignorant fashion. One could state that the female servants in all five plays besides being loyal are also knowledgeable, resourceful, and insightful.

Fops, such as Bareface in *The Northern Heiress* or, Marplot in *The Busie Body* have a more prominent part, and are contrary to Restoration Comedy convention, treated more sympathetic, and with some compassion. In that way, Davys, Centlivre, Haywood, and Pix deviate from common convention, and portray fops with a more intricate character.

Davys appears innovative in three ways: women are in control, gender inversion is present, and women use masculine language. Especially in *The Northern Heiress* Isabella, and Louisa are in control throughout the whole play, scheming and testing as is common in Restoration Comedy, but taking it just a step further. Isabella, particularly, is a highly intelligent and rational young woman who uses strong, direct, and masculine language to achieve her own goals and the goals of others. Isabella shows that through presenting herself with masculine traits and masculine utterances it is possible to control her own situation and the circumstances surrounding her. Lady Greasy, though, portrayed as a rather ridiculous and coarse woman makes herself noticed through the use of her language which is usually connected with the common man. In *The Self Rival*, the women are less level headed and not as much in control as Schofield remarks by saying that Davys did not manage to live up to the promise displayed in her earlier pieces (A Woman's Case 224).

With some reserve one might conclude, as this thesis only compares a few contemporary plays written by women, that Davys is innovative as regards to: her setting in *The Northern Heiress* is rural, women in *The Northern Heiress* are in control, her characters are less ridiculed, and are portrayed more sympathetic. Davys differs from Centlivre, Haywood, and Pix when she uses words that act on their own, and as such perform gender.

Mary Davys in *In the preface to her Works*, re- marked, “ The two Plays I leave to fight their own Battles; and I shall say no more, than that I was never so vain, as to think they deserv'd a Place in the first Rank, or so humble, as to resign them to the last" (*The Grub Street Journal*, Number 81, 1731).

Appendix A

Letter Allegedly Written by Davys Published in *The Grub Street Journal*

From The Grub Street Journal, Number 80,

Thursday, July 15, 1731.

From the PEGASUS in Grub Street.

To Mr. Bavius, Secretary to the Grub Street Society.

Cambridge, July 29.

Much respected Grub,

The gentle usage with which you treat all your Members (except our Orator) hath embolden'd me to address you in this manner, and forbids me to despair of receiving the decorum due to my Sex, as well as the respect due to me as a member. My Play, my Novels, my Wit (of which the young Students here can testify) I think may sufficiently entitle me to this illustrious character; yet that I may be owned and recorded so in one of your Journals, is the occasion of this Epistle: ----- You must know then, dear BAVY, that finding this a very bad place for one of our society to live by their Wit only, I frugally resolved, in imitation of a later Brother of ours, to turn an additional penny, by selling an inspiring cup, not of your insipid Parnassian Water, but true Heliconian Punch. How much even your Society owes to my Punch, I appeal to our famous Jonian Punsters, Orators and Poets. ----- My scheme succeeded, and to the character of a Wit, having that added of being a perfect Mistress in the finesses of love, my house was not only filled with Freshmen and Under-graduates; but learned M.A.'s and reverend D.D.'s have received not a little delight and profit from my instructions. My success in this way also exceeded expectation; I have made a young Fellow Commoner just come from kissing his Mothers maids, a

perfect master of intrigue in a week; a northern Jonian paste his wig, and with a tolerable assurance, hand an Alderman's Daughter to St. Mary's his first Sunday. Nay, the polite Trinitonians allow I'm perfectly instructed in the rudiments of Love, tho' they will not grant me the character of a Wit. From this last article, BAVY, all my misfortunes flow: for on the repute of my being a Wit, part of my business arises; and to obtain of them to pronounce me a Wit, I pronounc'd them so. What was the consequence of this? Why, immediately they set up for Wits, quitted their smart dress (for which they were so fam'd) for a wit-like slovenly air; they used me like Wits, left off admiring my writings, and wrote themselves, especially Satyrs and Sonnets; they run a tick, and never paid me; if I sent never so handsome a letter, they were not at chambers. In short, they set up for all the polite accomplishments of your modern London Wits. What could I do? If I spoke to 'em myself, they put me off with something they would have pass for wit. At last, upon arguing the case with some of the greatest of these Wits (i.e., those who had the greatest scores) they agreed, if I would own myself a Grubean, and get myself inroll'd in one of your next Journals, they'd immediately pay off their ticks. ----- Tho' I myself have the greatest veneration and esteem for the name of a GRUB, I must confess it bears no great character here: and by this artifice of theirs, I'm brought to this Dilemma, I must either own myself a Wit, or I must disown my debt. I can ill bear to lose either: I can't afford to give 'em my debts; and on the reputation of my wit, part of my trade subsists. Yet after many serious considerations (if you'd entitle me to my debts and record me a Member, by inserting this) I rather chuse to be a Grubean with my money, than have only the name of Wit without. I am (on admission) your Sister,

PHILOGRUBAEA

Appendix B

Davys's Letter of Response

From The Grub Street Journal, Number 81,

Thursday, July 22, 1731.

From the PAGASUS in Grub Street.

For Mr. ----- to be left at his Chambers in Grub Street.

Sir,

Tho' my Hand trembles and my Eyes are almost blind, I can not forbear sending you my best thanks for the True Grubean Letter you publish'd last week in my name, it is certainly so very full of wit that you have done me too great an Honour and I can not tell how to get out of your debt, and yet I fear part of the obligation is due to a second Person, for one single Head could never find Stuf enough for such a worthy and leamed Epistle, I therefore fancy you call'd in the assistance of Glib Tongued wife of a certain Gentlemen Tailor who fancies like your dear self She has wit enough to serve a whole Parish, but I will now lay by the wit and come to the Malice of it which is I own inimitable and there I believe she helpt you again, but as you are a Friend I do not much care if I give you the Merit of that intirely to your self.

As for the Licquor you speak of, had it been Eleemosynary it wou'd have had no fault and had I never desired to be paid for it I should have had none neither but a Dun is the Devil and I was the Devil upon Dun. The Novels may e'ne fight their own Battles all I shall say for or against them is, that they are too unfashionable to have one word of Baudy in them, the Readers are the bestjudges and to them I appeal; it is a pitty any Gentleman shoul'd make himself a Lier where so many are ready to confute him, but

he is doubtless a Great Man, and yet by my troath, I think he has very little to do now the Grand affair is over, however, he has written a speech that make every body Laugh tho' there is not one jest in it.

Cambridge, July 29, 1731.

Appendix C

Chronology of Events in the Life of Mary Davys

- ca.1674 Mary Davys born, most likely in Ireland; parentage and birth names unknown;
- ca. 1692- 94 Mary marries Reverend Peter Davys, in Dublin;
- 1694 Peter Davys becomes Headmaster of St. Patrick's School, Dublin;
- 1695 Death of Davys's daughter, Ann;
- 1698 Death of Peter Davys;
- 1699 Birth and death of Davys's daughter, Mary;
- 1700 Davys leaves Ireland for England;
- ca. 1700- 04 Davys lives in London; *The False Friend; or the Treacherous Portugeze* written but not published at this time;
- 1704 Davys publishes *The Amours of Alcippus and Lucippe*, later republished in *The Works of Mrs. Davys* as *The Lady's Tale*; she moves to York;
- 1705 Davys publishes *The Fugitive*;
- 1716 Davys's play *The Northern Heiress* performed at Lincoln's-Inn Fields and published; she moves to London;
- 1716- 18 Davys lives in London; her poem, *Answer from the King of Sweden to the British Lady's Epistle*, published (not extant); *Familiar Letters Betwixt a Gentleman and a Lady* written but not published at this time; *The Self Rival* written, but not published or performed;
- 1718 Davys moves to Cambridge and opens a coffeehouse;
- 1724 Davys publishes *The Reform'd Coquet, or Memoirs of Amoranda*, by subscription;
- 1725 The publication of *The Works of Mrs. Davys* in two volumes, by subscription. In these volumes, Davys presents most of her work up to this point, much of it revised. *The Fugitive* becomes *The Merry Wanderer*; *The False Friend, or the Treacherous Portugeze* becomes *The Cousins*; and *The Amours of Alcippus and Lucippe* becomes *The Lady's Tale*. *Familiar Letters Betwixt a Gentleman and a Lady*, *The Self Rival* (with annotation "As it should have been performed at

Drury Lane”), and *The Modern Poet* receive their only publication in her lifetime. *The Reform ’d Coquet* and *The Northern Heiress* are also included;

1727 Publication of *The Accomplish ’d Rake*;

1731 Davys is satirized in *The Grub Street Journal* and she responds;

1732 Davys publishes *The False Friend; or the Treacherous Portugeze*, probably an earlier version of *The Cousins*; the dedication to Lady Slingsby, and the preface (an abridgement of the preface to *The Works of Mrs. Davys*) are prepared for this edition.

Mary Davys dies in Cambridge and is buried on July 3 at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, also known as the Round Church.

Appendix D

Susanna Centlivre (c. 1669-1723)

Although the facts about Susanne Centlivre's birth are still inconclusive it is generally agreed upon that she was the child of William and Anne Freeman of Lincolnshire, baptised in 1669 as Susanne Freeman. Centlivre probably spend some of her younger years in Ireland, but most of her childhood is still undiscovered. Centlivre is said to have left home at a young age after her father died, and is believed to have lived with a Mr. Fox until his death. After this period Centlivre allegedly became involved with a young Cambridge student, Anthony Hammond, who possibly allowed her to receive some form of education before she moved to London to establish herself in the theatre. As to her marital life it is said that she was married three times. Only her third marriage to Joseph Centlivre in 1707 is fully documented. By the time she married him, Susanne Centlivre had already achieved some success through her writing (Finberg xvii- xxi).

Centlivre's journalist friend Abel Boyer (c. 1667- 1729) helped her launch her career, with the production of the tragicomic play *The Perjur'd Husband* (1700) at the Drury Lane Theatre in 1700. As was common in Centlivre's time, women writing was usually frowned upon and for that reason, Centlivre published several plays anonymously. Her play, *The Busie Body* (1709), was initially rejected by Drury Lane, and was seen as "a silly thing wrote by a Woman" (Donohue 83). However Centlivre, confident in her skill, kept pressing the play and it became one of her most successful works, winning the praise of Richard Steele (1672-1729) in *The Tatler* (1709-). Throughout her life, her writings as well as her openness about her Whiggish political views created problems especially in relation to the theatre companies as they were anxious to avoid censure from Queen Anne's Tory government. Centlivre's final major comedy *A Bold Stroke for a Wife* (1718) was successfully staged

at Lincoln's Inn Fields that same year. Her health started to decline in the next year, she died in 1723, and was buried at St. Paul's in Covent Garden (Cotton 123, Pearson 205)

Appendix E

Eliza Haywood (c. 1693- 1756)

Eliza Haywood was probably born in London in 1693, and married in 1710. Although there is not much documentation, Haywood is said to have separated from her husband between 1715 and 1720. What is known, is that she worked as an actress in Ireland, and in London, where she also published her remarkably successful first novel, *Love in Excess; or, The Fatal Enquiry in three volumes* in 1719 and 1720. The dramas she wrote early in her career, were less successful, which led her to focus on writing novels to sustain an income. Haywood is recognized for introducing character studies into her works at a time when a detailed analysis of character was not common in popular fiction. *The Female Spectator* (1744-6), the first magazine by a woman for women, and written entirely by Haywood dealt with such topics as love, marriage, female education, morals, manners, literature, philosophy, and the arts. The magazine, which appeared for two years, was an innovative attempt to raise the intellectual level of popular reading material for women. During her lifetime Haywood wrote and published over seventy works including drama, fiction, conduct literature, poetry, translations, and periodicals (Schofield, Introduction to Masquerade Novels of Eliza Haywood 31). Although her popularity declined towards the end of her life, she continued to write and publish until close to her death in 1756 (Rubik 131).

Appendix F

Mary Pix (1666- 1709)

Mary Griffith was born in Oxfordshire; she was the daughter of a pastor who died young. At the age of eighteen she married merchant George Pix and settled in London. Pix debuted at the Dorset Gardens Theatre with the tragedy *Ibrahim* (1696) and the farce *The Spanish Wives* (1696) before switching to the rival theatre Lincoln's Inn Fields. In the anonymous satire *The Female Wits* (1696) Pix was ridiculed along with playwrights Delarivier Manley (1663- c.1670) and Catharine Trotter (c.1674- 1749). Pix appeared as the character Mrs. Wellfed, a foolish and honest lady quite fond of her food and drink. Although Pix wrote some fine comedies most often employing the pattern of bustling multi-plot intrigue comedy – she felt a need to write tragedy, for which she was less gifted. Her most successful comedies include *The Spanish Wives* (1696), *The Innocent Mistress* (1697), *The Deceiver Deceived* (1697), *The Beau Defeated* (1700), and *The Adventures in Madrid* (1706). There is some dispute about the authorship of her last four plays and after 1707 she published nothing. She was buried at London's St. Clement Danes Churchyard in 1709. Her friend Susannah Centlivre held a benefit performance of her own comedy *The Busie Body* for the author's family.

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