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## Theatre Women and Cultural Diplomacy in the Transatlantic Anglophone World (1752-1807)

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THEATRE WOMEN AND CULTURAL DIPLOMACY IN THE TRANSATLANTIC  
ANGLOPHONE WORLD (1752-1807)

A Dissertation Presented

by

SANDRA WILSON PEROT

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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Department of History

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## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated with love  
to my parents, Donald and Patricia Wilson;  
to my brother, Steve Wilson;  
to my children, Zoë, Skyler, and Lyric;  
and to my extraordinary husband, Blair.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **THEATRE WOMEN AND CULTURAL DIPLOMACY IN THE TRANSATLANTIC ANGLOPHONE WORLD (1752-1807)**

SEPTEMBER 2016

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Anglophone theatre provided a solid cultural bridge between Britain and America and served as an influential, informative, and accessible mode of social, political and cultural exchange transported throughout the eighteenth-century transatlantic world. Unlike works focusing on colonial American restrictions on theater, or examining its subsequent role in constructing American nationhood and identity, I explore how theatre served to both cultivate and challenge transatlantic connections. I show that actresses and women playwrights played a distinctive role in this process; they exercised agency in helping shape Anglo identity, influenced the formation of the cult of celebrity, challenged physical gendered spaces and normative social behavior, and entered intellectual landscapes culturally, socially, and politically informed.

Most scholarship examining Anglophone theatre isolates performances and plays by their location, genre, performer/author, or role. However, looking through the lens of the greater transatlantic world makes clear the contributions of Anglophone theatre women and reveals their influence on cultural and diplomatic exchange. By innovatively bringing together stories of actresses and women playwrights, and by examining their experiences and works as microhistories, I show that women both knowingly and inadvertently became instrumental as cultural diplomats who helped solidify connections between Britain and America, palliate the political differences of the period, and engage audiences in national identity conversations.

*Theater Women and Cultural Diplomacy* creatively adopts a long-durée framework and incorporates diplomatic, cultural, and social history; theatre and performance studies; literary theory; biography; and gender studies to suggest how women provided critical cultural cohesion as well as social and political civic awareness. The interconnectedness of Anglo theatre includes conversations about materiality and immateriality, presence and absence, performance, publication, and circulation; gender and identity, intercolonial challenges and nationhood. While the bulk of my thesis focuses on the later eighteenth century, my analysis begins in 1660 when women first legally participated in British theatre and continues through the end of the eighteenth century when Anglophone theatre women contribute to both a new “American” voice and British identity. As early celebrities, actresses and women playwrights used theatre to challenge social norms and gender normativity, offer ways of reimagining women in a changed world, and effect cultural diplomacy. They would do so with exceptional poise, perseverance, and perceptiveness all in the face of three significant revolutions: the American Revolution, the French Revolution, and the Haitian Revolution.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **Introduction**

Between 1752 and 1800 Anglophone theatre provided cultural cohesion between Britain and America despite ongoing social and political upheaval. Theatre also established and maintained a sense of transatlantic cultural continuity despite the separation of 3200 nautical miles, conflicting social norms, and considerable political tensions. Women played a particularly significant role in maintaining such cultural cohesion. Comparing the experiences of Anglophone women involved with theatre reveals how they engaged with their world, how they shared their experiences with various audiences, and how they influenced and helped to shape cultural, social and political civic awareness transatlantically.

This dissertation explores how actresses, particularly those women appearing onstage after the American Revolution/Revolt, became Britain's and then America's first celebrities, providing an important socio-cultural bond between America and Britain. Indeed, as actresses gained public attention and became celebrities, they shifted away from their role as social pariahs and became widely admired for their acting skills and for their ability to connect emotionally with their audience.<sup>1</sup> This work also examines how women playwrights acted as cultural and political ambassadors, using their words rather than their bodies to influence transatlantic Anglophone social, political, and cultural normativity. I argue that these white, Anglophone women involved with theatre who wrote plays and performed publicly during a time when women were generally excluded from official public diplomacy in eighteenth-century Anglophone society, did engage in a kind of social, cultural, and political public diplomacy, as long as we broaden our understanding of diplomacy to consider forms of exchange beyond traditional politics.

Diplomacy can look quite different depending on whether the nations represented are similarly powerful or whether they confront a significant power imbalance. During the course of the period represented within this study, the power imbalance that regularly occurred and

subsequent shifts in (political) power between Britain, America, and the British West Indies affected the nature of the political, social, and cultural diplomacy enacted by actresses and incorporated into plays written by women. In addition, following the American Revolution, selling “American” qualities and characters in public plays became a new mode of entertainment that newly minted “American” citizens by the 1790s wished to see. These new characters and voices helped to encourage audiences to embrace a new American nationalistic identity where previously they had considered themselves a group of unified but unique colonies. While actresses publicly performed roles that evoked cultural, social, and political awareness, revolutionary and post-revolutionary American playwrights used theatrical print culture and the increasing popularity and access of printed material to comment (in prologues and epilogues) about the rights of Americans to speak out.<sup>2</sup>

Outlining the definitions of several terms used within this study, as well as its time period, can help us understand the distinctive role and importance of eighteenth-century Anglophone actresses and women playwrights in bringing about Anglophone transatlantic cultural cohesion as a sense of national identity. Terms that benefit from clarification as they relate to this work include: theatrical celebrity (rather than political, religious or military celebrity), cultural diplomacy, national identity and a distinct American voice, and finally, traditional and unconventional female roles.

I define theatrical celebrity as the quality of recognition and popularity performers and playwrights gained working or writing for theatre. Because this thesis highlights the social and cultural contributions of women involved with theatre, I examine how actresses became important public figures and how playwrights became recognized authors. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Anglophone actresses in particular garnered increasing audience attention and a loyal (often but not exclusively male) following that could and did catapult these women to positions of social and economic prominence. In comparison, other public and influential figures in the transatlantic Anglophone world such as preachers (like George

Whitefield), politicians (John Adams), and military leaders (George Washington) also gained popular support, but these public “celebrities” were for the most part men in positions of power. Actresses could boast no formal power beyond their weekly performances onstage and as women who shared social and cultural customs and exchanged ideas with various audiences. Yet these women were publicly influential if not powerful and they helped establish a type of cultural and social cohesion between Britain and the greater transatlantic empire through their performances, and in their manners, their style of dress and hair, and their attitudes about women’s roles in society as public working women. British actresses performing in America held special sway and were often announced (and further celebrated) by theatre managers as coming from the London stage, elevating them from local performers. Thus the idea of the actress as “celebrity,” and women playwrights as recognized and admired (if not quite as celebrated) public figures allowed women involved with theatre to serve as influential public figures during a time when it was highly unusual and against social conventions for women to do so.

The unconventional roles women involved with theatre took on were myriad. First, women publicly performing or publishing plays, and occasionally acting as theatre managers, worked against contemporary Anglo standards of women not calling attention to themselves. Second, the mere presence of women onstage to be ogled as much as admired called into question their moral standards (“public” women being long-associated in British society with prostitutes), and challenged male dominance within the theatre itself. Third, the very nature of theatre and public performance meant that actresses assumed unconventional roles by literally dressing in male clothing or mimicking male traits onstage, or (possibly considered even more dangerous at the time) by asserting themselves with physical or emotional strength not often associated with contemporary views of the female or the feminine. Fourth, women playwrights manipulated these unconventional gender roles by having cross-dressing male performers throw out barbed gendered comments that reflected how women saw themselves constricted within Anglo society.<sup>3</sup> In examining a variety of individual women involved with theatre, it is important to understand

both the conventional roles women played within the greater social order as working women, wives, mothers and even writers and theatre managers, as well as the *unconventional* roles they played as active participants in Anglophone theatre and public performance.

In many ways, the idea of “cultural diplomacy” provides the foundation for this study and I use the term to suggest how Anglophone theatre with its longstanding importance as a British cultural tradition, came to be used as a significant mode of cultural exchange in allowing transatlantic colonists to feel connected to the British mainland, and for other cultures to share with British cultural traditions. Between 1660 and 1800 theatre served as an iconic, perhaps even an essential form of British culture that had few social, political, or national barriers. In many ways it served as a microcosm of British culture more generally, allowing music, language, fashion, attitudes, political ideology, social customs and mores, to become transported nationally within Britain and transatlantically throughout the expanding British Empire. Anglophone theatre was relatable, admirable, challenging, entertaining, informative, offensive, and lucrative. Anglophone theatre during the eighteenth century may have been the most recognized and admired emblem of British culture. Following the American Revolution, having thrown off the British and claiming independence, Americans began to utilize theatre in order to establish their own national identity and separate (if similar) “Anglo” culture.

In addition, the idea of diplomacy retains multiple implications and senses. For example, diplomacy often implies a kind of tact or diplomatic speaker, diffusing of tensions—such as engaging in conversation rather than war, and even exchange more generally. At the same time diplomacy both implies promoting connections and encompasses challenging them. Diplomacy also implies a level of intentionality—for example diplomats engaging in conversations with a specific brief or agenda as Robert Dinwiddie did in 1752 when he included a theatrical component in his treaty negotiations with Cherokee leaders, as chapter three discusses. Yet the intentionality of diplomacy as it is often understood today was not always present when women served as transatlantic Anglophone theatre “diplomats” as I suggest in the following chapters.

While actresses and women playwrights during the eighteenth century certainly engaged in a type of diplomacy in exchanging political and cultural conversations, not all of these performers and authors had the same intent. Sometimes they served as cultural diplomats knowingly. This was the case with playwrights Mercy Otis Warren, Susanna Rowson, Sarah Pogson Smith, and Elizabeth Inchbald, and perhaps in the performances of Susanna Rowson (especially when she performed her own Epilogues) and Elizabeth Whitlock, sister of Sarah Siddons. These women intentionally used theatre as an accepted cultural method in order to engage in socio-political conversations knowing it could call people to action. On the other hand, performances and plays by women sometimes engaged with diplomacy unknowingly or covertly, as suggested by the performances of the first professional actresses to arrive in America in Lewis Hallam's London Company of Comedians including Mrs. Hallam, and her niece, Nancy; and in the transatlantically performed plays by playwrights Susanna Centlivre and Hannah Cowley. While such women may have been focused on their own careers, their performances and works still served to engage audiences in transatlantic cultural and diplomatic exchanges.

Likewise, performances and plays could be interpreted in a variety of ways depending upon the theatre manager and performers' intentions, the composition of the audience, or even what social or political events outside of the theatre were taking place when a play was staged. For example, the staging of Joseph Addison's *Cato*, by officers for George Washington's soldiers during the Revolution would have been interpreted very differently at that particular moment and in light of the ongoing war than it might have been before the war, or if it were performed by British soldiers (as it was often, since it was a favorite Anglo play). Likewise, we can assume that Mrs. Hallam's performance of Desdemona for the Cherokee entourage in 1752, , would have been interpreted very differently by the Cherokee audience in attendance that evening than it was by the Anglo audience. Indeed, this particular performance offered various levels of interpretation since the Anglo audience was also there to see the Cherokee guests. At one point, the wife of the Cherokee leader who found the action too violent interrupted the play and called for it to cease,

an off-stage scene that affected the meaning of on-stage performance. This type of ongoing cultural diplomacy through theatre highlights the importance of Anglophone transatlantic theatre during the eighteenth century central to most of the discussions in this study.

In addition, while diplomacy often implies the idea of engagement in foreign or international relations, most of the examples of cultural diplomacy within this work exist on a more *intranational* level. Prior to the American Revolution, the type of cultural diplomacy that theatre engaged in significantly involved a transatlantic exchange—Britons with American colonists, American colonists with other American colonists, American colonists with Native peoples, other European nationals living in America, etc. Yet many eighteenth-century American colonists considered themselves British and saw theatre as a way to continue to remain culturally connected—theatre thus served as diplomacy since it reminded colonists what it meant to be British. It also suggested how they should act as time passed and colonists remained separated transatlantically.

During the last quarter of the eighteenth century, theatre in both Britain and America also became a volatile public space with audiences breaking out in riots and public disturbances.<sup>4</sup> Although the Continental Congress banned theatre during the American Revolution, British officers continued to perform Anglophone theatre. They did so as a way to entertain troops during long periods of inactivity. Both the British and American military embraced theatricality during the American Revolution, using public performances to garner political sympathy, establish a sense of national identity, and raise money and “awareness” for local “widows and orphans” all while entertaining audiences and raising military morale. The British military and American colonists who remained loyal to the British crown or indifferent to colonial independence filled the audience. Some performances were extraordinary. For example, the Meschianza, an elaborate *fête* that included jousting, a ball, banquet, and fireworks, was organized by Captain John André and John Montresor and given in honor of General Howe in Philadelphia on 18 May 1778. Poet, actor, and stage director, André also painted scenes for subsequent performances given by

the British military. Local women, often mistresses of British officers, took on female roles; when no women were available, the British military simply staged their productions with all-male ensembles. British officers enlisted the help of local American women in their performances. Post-Revolutionary Americans, particularly consumers who had made a stand against British goods and services (including attending British performances) during the Revolutionary period, ceased snubbing British commodities that connected them with British culture, including London theatre and the actresses who had stepped on London stages.<sup>5</sup>

Following the American Revolution, particularly in the 1790s, theatre became even more popular in America, both in its association with British culture (that allowed separated colonists, now Americans, to reestablish cultural connections) and as a way for the newly formed country and its citizens to establish and define an American identity (and thus continued to challenge America's connections with Britain). Many of these moments of cultural diplomacy took place cross-culturally. Performances of Shakespeare, for example, were given to audiences that ranged from well-educated colony governors and their socially elite neighbors to members of Native aristocracy and colonists who had never set foot in Britain and had never experienced British theatre firsthand. Most important for our discussion, however, is the idea that Anglophone theatre was used to establish a cultural flow between and amongst various groups of individuals both transatlantically and trans- or *intranationally*, and that it became an important, and at times influential form of cultural diplomacy.

Women as actresses and playwrights became successful cultural diplomats because they were approachable, charming, talented, memorable, and non-threatening. While at times controversial, Anglophone women actresses and playwrights used their bodies and voices to gain public attention. Ultimately, they were able to enact diplomatic engagement that helped strengthen cultural bonds between Britain and America in spite of America's initial resistance to theatre, the American Revolution, and America's desire to assert its own national voice and identity following war. Finally, the idea of cultural diplomacy as employed by Anglophone

actresses and playwrights between 1752 and 1807, allows us to think about the term both as a means of creating, sustaining, or challenging cultural connections, and as a means for intervening in, or commenting on contemporary political relations.

America's desire to define itself as a unique social, cultural, and political entity during the last quarter of the eighteenth century (particularly during and immediately following the American Revolution) also requires clarification. While Americans ultimately defined themselves politically by adopting Republicanism over Monarchy, they also enacted social and cultural reforms to separate themselves from Britain. Prior to and during the American Revolution, American merchants called for colonists to boycott British products and services and newspapers announced a call for citizens to eschew British goods. The Second Continental Congress enacted laws banning traditional cultural entertainment embraced by Britons as inappropriate forms of entertainment including theatre gambling and cock-fighting. Regional differences aside, not all of the colonies viewed theatre in a negative light, particularly in the mid-Atlantic and Southern colonies, this ban on theatre unified American regions and in some ways helped craft a more unified "American" identity. Some regions (particularly New England) saw British theatre as a luxury and derided it on republican and moral principles (and continued to do so into the nineteenth century), while other regions (particularly those areas in the South and Mid-Atlantic regions) identified with and admired British theatre and wished to remain culturally connected. In addition, it must be stated that many American inhabitants did not have Anglo roots and thus had no specific cultural connection with British theatre, nor did they have reason to see British theatre as either oppressive or culturally subversive. In fact, Native populations like the Cherokees saw theatre as a way to connect culturally with their Anglo neighbors. Their own traditions of performance (particularly in times of war) allowed them to understand theatre as a powerful mode of social and political assertion (particularly in asserting their physical dominance); they themselves used theatre as a mode of cultural diplomacy that suggested they felt their position next to their American neighbors was as cultural and political equals.

Interestingly, once the American Revolution ended and America had clearly asserted its political and social independence from Britain, British culture once again grew popular in America. This return to embracing Anglo culture, (at least for some former Britons since many colonists never wavered in their loyalty to king and crown) is in many ways not surprising. Periods of great trauma and change caused by events like the American Revolution, are often followed by periods wherein society attempts to stabilize itself by practicing (at least temporarily) social and cultural traditions in order to restrict rapid or potentially uncontrollable (and thus socially damaging) change. In the case of the American response to social and political upheaval following the Revolution, America sought to “normalize” society by embracing Anglo culture that did not threaten the new social or political changes established through war in the separation from Britain. The end of the American Revolution did not end social and political conflicts in America immediately at its conclusion and America continued to grapple with understanding and defining its new place in the transatlantic world. Internal arguments over issues concerning slavery and women’s rights, voting rights, Articles of Confederation, the Federalist Papers, and the Constitution all suggest just how difficult it was for America to gain social and political stability in the decades following the Revolution.

In addition to dropping Revolutionary-era boycotts on British products and services, including theatrical performances, in an effort to create cultural cohesion between colonies and colonists, post-Revolutionary American consumers eagerly resumed their consumption of British-made goods and services, a phenomenon historian T. H. Breen addresses in *The Marketplace of Revolution*.<sup>6</sup> I would argue that the resumption of British culture consumption in post-war America was an attempt to return to “normal life” following war and allowed citizens (as consumers) to reconnect with their Anglo roots. Theatre, the very essence of which is a public, allowed newly-minted American citizens to engage actively in a community performance that created a shared Anglo-cultural experience. While pre-American Revolution Anglophone theatre allowed for a shared transatlantic experience, post-war Anglophone theatre allowed for a shared

transnational, even *transcultural* experience where Anglophone theatre *transcended* recent rifts between Britain and America and actively *transferred* shared cultural experiences once again *transatlantically*.

The popularity of theatre following the Revolution reflected how American society set out to repair the cultural Anglo divide caused by social and political fractures with Britain. British performers in particular cultivated an active following and became celebrities almost immediately upon their arrival in America and were sought out simply because they had performed on the London stage. Eventually American performers and playwrights gained attention but through 1800, British actresses and women playwrights remained the most adored and recognized individuals who helped Americans assess, critique and define their new world order. By embracing British culture—in particular British theatre—an important paradox arises. Americans of all classes began to define their own values, views, and ideals, and craft their own unique American identity that struggled to define itself in terms of egalitarianism and hierarchy, slavery and freedom, federalism and anti-federalism. Issues Americans had with British theatre—its British origins, theatrical associations with effeminacy and luxury, and its anti-republicanism—became rechanneled under “American” managers and performers who learned early to focus on themes such as freedom, equality, liberty and who developed iconic and unique American characters like the frontiersman, the republican woman, and the noble savage. The establishment of a national identity became an important aspect of American theatrical diplomacy as it worked to strengthen connections between states that had previously considered themselves separate.

Finally, the idea that Anglophone theatre helped women engage in conventional and unconventional roles throughout the eighteenth-century transatlantic world is significant in helping to see how and why women became involved with theatre in the first place. Anglophone actresses and playwrights become important players in defining unconventional gender roles even as they attempted to work and perform within acceptable social norms. Yet, working women were not in themselves unusual during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Britain or the

transatlantic region. Women helped run family businesses, worked as governesses, seamstresses, artists, authors, shopkeepers. Thus the idea of Anglophone women working publicly was not novel but their participation in theatre, long reserved as the stomping ground of Anglophone men, was more unusual, all the more so because theatre allowed women to take on a variety of roles both onstage (where they might literally transform themselves characters as diverse as duchesses, queens, princes, knights, villains, and maids), and off (where their popularity and physical appeal might lead them to become mistresses of the very top of British society). Regardless, theatre provided women with a way to make a living, and where actresses could perform with their parents, siblings, husbands, and children; company members and family groups also provided an extended family for actresses. Women playwrights, likewise, supplemented their family income (or served as sole providers) and successful actresses and playwrights both had the potential to earn substantially more money than they could in most professions open to women before 1800; many of these women managed to raise their social standing significantly through work or marriage opportunities that became available because of theatre. Theatre also provided women with a socially progressive environment that allowed them to work, be married, and raise their children so that families could remain together.

Even though the environment in which women worked and performed was fairly progressive for the time both in placing (mostly white) women in public positions and in allowing married mothers to work, many of the roles women played or wrote were surprisingly traditional. Sexually explicit plays of the late seventeenth century gave way to lighter social comedies of the eighteenth century celebrating (or discussing) marriage and women as wives, lovers, mothers. That is not to say that all theatre women accepted these traditional roles—a handful of actresses and women playwrights called into question society's normative expectations for women. They challenged marriage customs and the limiting normative positions of women in Anglo society. They discussed political conflicts, challenged silencing women and gave these women voice. Even if seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Anglophone theatre is seen overall as supportive of

women in traditional roles, considering the very public nature of Anglophone theatre and its ability to translate social, cultural, and political values and views throughout the transatlantic world, these women involved with theatre as actresses, playwrights, and theatre managers, were fairly *untraditional* compared with their non-theatrical female counterparts given limited public voice. And ultimately, the position of these women as public figures allowed them to present themselves as effective, approachable, and engaging cultural diplomats throughout the transatlantic Anglophone world. Theatre allowed women to craft a sense of cultural cohesion in a tumultuous transatlantic Anglophone world, comment on social and political shifts, and embrace traditional roles as mothers, wives, sisters, daughters and untraditional roles as political and social commentators, public figures, and mouthpieces for individuals whose voices were often ignored.

My work differs from previous work examining eighteenth-century Anglophone theatre, actresses and women playwrights in its inclusivity of transatlantic Anglophone locations (Britain, America and the British West Indies) and in its attempt to examine theatre as a form of transatlantic, transnational, and international cultural diplomacy. I also consider how travel influenced women's theatrical performance and plays, something other scholars have overlooked, and incorporate both actresses and women playwrights in this study of Anglophone theatre women, suggesting that both actresses and women playwrights influenced and affected cultural diplomacy in the transatlantic Anglophone world, instead of isolating the socio-cultural diplomatic effectiveness of either actresses or women playwrights within their contributions.

Much scholarship focusing on Anglophone women playwrights and actresses isolates the performances and plays of women within one location. For example, British actresses, playwrights, and their plays are compared within a British context, American actresses, playwrights and their plays are analyzed within the context of American society and so on. While these studies are very useful in understanding the localized social and cultural contributions of Anglophone theatre women within a specific framework, looking at Anglophone theatre through the lens of the greater transatlantic world reveals important new transnational and multicultural

connections. In thinking about imperial formations, for example, the model for understanding how eighteenth-century theatre and how women in particular worked within this framework of cultural, political, and social diplomacy (and which reflects how plays and actresses circulated transatlantically) is the model of imagining Britain as the metropole with spokes reaching out to the periphery (or better seen as colonial outposts). This view, however, begins to change following the American Revolution when the imperial model shifts toward a web without a central hub, or metropole, in which important ideas/practices circulate between different colonies (like America and the West Indies) without necessarily going through a controlled social center or metropole, a view that also reflects the viewpoint of more recent imperial historians. The implications of such a model suggest that plays and actresses seem to emerge from the British metropole (specifically London) prior to 1773. Thus the flow of cultural exchange before the American Revolution tended to be more in the direction of British culture informing transatlantic Anglophone culture rather than colonial or American theatre influencing Britain. Beginning in the 1790s, however, plays and actresses from the United States appear to effect change in British culture.<sup>7</sup>

This study is limited to examining white working-class and privileged women involved with theatre. I argue that these women were instrumental in shaping social constructions throughout the English-speaking Atlantic region. While racial identity is a critical topic in understanding the importance of performance in the greater transatlantic seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Anglophone society, a more focused examination of race lies outside of the scope of this study but would certainly make for an excellent future project.

Ultimately, my work seeks to provide innovative comparisons between the writings, performances and experiences of Anglophone theatre women in Britain and America, particularly traveling performers and playwrights, as a way of understanding the cultural (and diplomatic) exchanges, effectiveness of agency and celebrity status of theatre women during the long eighteenth century in the transatlantic world, I argue that as cultural, social, and at times political

diplomats these actresses and women playwrights instrumentally influenced Anglophone theatre (and through theatre, Anglophone society) in ways that helped solidify the cultural connection between Britain and America, thereby helping to palliate the political differences between these two nations that threatened to break any social or cultural connection.

### **Background**

Despite the ongoing political divide at the end of the century that threatened to fracture all connections between America and Britain, theatre continued to provide a solid cultural bridge between these two countries.<sup>8</sup> Unusual in being both a product (plays and performances) and a service (entertainment and information or cultural exchange) Anglophone theatre provided transnational access and strengthened cultural cohesion between Britain and its ever-expanding empire and served as one of the major mechanisms for transferring ideas throughout the transatlantic Anglophone world.<sup>9</sup> In addition, theatre established an important visual/aural social arena where British attitudes and characters were transferred to American stages.<sup>10</sup> Using theatre as a shared tradition and a communal experience allowed Britain and America to create and retain their social and cultural traditions in spite of separating politically.<sup>11</sup>

Theatre, in the formal sense of public staged performance, did not become a significant social influence in America until the 1790s at the conclusion of the American Revolution. Not surprisingly (given eighteenth-century Britain's large city population, number of permanent theatres, opportunities for performers to train, and overwhelming social acceptance of theatre as a national tradition), Britain exported actresses and plays to America more successfully than America exported either plays or performers to Britain during the entire eighteenth century. While theatre maintained its popularity in Britain from the seventeenth through the eighteenth centuries, and influenced everything from portraiture to religious sermons in Britain, theatre (and theatricality) in America remained fringe entertainment with limited audience support,

particularly in New England. I would argue, however, that while literal theatrical performances struggled to gain public acceptance universally in America and that acting companies struggled both financially and socially as they traveled, theatrical representations emerged in America during this period that were heavily influenced by British social and cultural exchanges—reflected in religious sermons such as those given by George Whitfield (1714-1770) and Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), and in theatrical portraiture as represented by John Singleton Copley (1738-1815), Benjamin West (1738-1820), and Charles Willson Peale (1741-1827), the artist who would go on to paint the first portrait of an American actress, Nancy Hallam, in 1771.<sup>12</sup> In an attempt to re-strengthen its social, cultural, and intellectual bonds with Britain once the Revolution concluded, American theatre became more socially acceptable by the 1790s, especially when combined with political and social activism that reflected new American ideals and a desire to craft a unique American identity and voice.<sup>13</sup>

Theatre in America struggled to take hold due to moral resistance before the American Revolution, and met with a new form of political resistance during the Revolutionary Era as protesting colonists imagined imported British goods and services as a source of foreign political dominance and aggression.<sup>14</sup> Yet while the Second Continental Congress called for a limit on certain forms of public entertainment as part of their effort to quell British imports including public plays and gambling, the British military (dislocated from Britain and their beloved theatre) continued to stage public performances on American soil. Kenneth Silverman offers a distinctive interpretation of the American Revolution that highlights the stakes both of resisting and perpetuating British culture. He focuses on colonist determination to define themselves through their culture, and their rejection of British identity, which ultimately resulted in Revolution. The American Revolution actually allowed colonists to define meant to be “American” in the creation of a new cultural identity with American goods and services. But once war ended, many newly minted Americans who formerly identified as Britons now wished to reestablish their Anglo connections, including purchasing goods and services to which they had become previously

accustomed.<sup>15</sup> As Silverman points out, instead of diminishing interest in British theatre (and thus British culture), the American Revolution actually increased public interest in drama because of the extended presence of British military and their fondness for theatre.<sup>16</sup> Yet, by initially eschewing British imports for an extended period during the Revolutionary era, protesting colonists established a foundation of inter-colonial trust that helped forge a national identity necessary at the Revolution's conclusion.

Consumer influence in America pre-revolution should not be underestimated. Beginning in the middle of the eighteenth century, members of the American middling classes (including farmers and merchants) gained power as consumers as they voiced concern over product quality and style, chose which shops to frequent and demanded credit. While such consumer power existed in Britain, America differed from Britain in that most of its goods prior to the Revolution were imported and became representative of political signs of oppression.<sup>17</sup> T. H. Breen posits that because colonists shared a common identity as consumers of British products and that the empire of goods that initially helped colonists imagine themselves as British later gave the same colonists a language of protest. Breen argues that

the colonists' shared experience as consumers provided them with the cultural resources needed to develop a bold new form of political protest...Goods became a foundation of trust, for one's willingness to sacrifice the pleasures of the market provided a remarkably visible and effective test of allegiance.<sup>18</sup>

The non-importation and non-consumption of British goods and services, including theatre in all of its aspects (actors, performances, costumes, publications), enacted a brilliantly original political strategy. It mobilized the populace locally while enabling ordinary people (including women) to think in terms of a larger American community, including non-Anglo inhabitants, for the first time.

Late eighteenth-century Anglophone women gained influence as public figures through their performances, plays and as theatre managers even though men still dominated theatre in positions of authority as theatre managers, lead performers, and as playwrights whose plays were

most often performed and published.<sup>19</sup> In spite of this seeming disadvantage, these women became identifiable “celebrities” whose onstage performances drew audiences and whose offstage activities, including their personal intrigues and fashion sense, served as active contributors of cultural transmission.<sup>20</sup> How they spoke or acted, how they dressed onstage as women or men, or challenged normative gender roles offstage, along with the very roles they performed as ingénues, widows, shrews or mistress allowed Anglophone transatlantic society to see how women should or could interact with and change their world. And thus, Anglophone actresses, and to a minor extent women playwrights, I argue, became the first transatlantic “celebrities.” More importantly, they contributed to the power and the nature of these cultural transmissions and the role an individual (and minority voice) might play in the process.

According to theatre historian Laura Engel,

In an era when acting was usually regarded as a suspicious profession for women, late-eighteenth-century actresses were the featured players in a society obsessed with fashion, rumor, and intrigue. Gossip about actresses’ affairs and liaisons filled the papers. Scandalous memoirs and biographies circulated in coffeehouses. Caricatures of their extravagant behaviors lined the print shops. Yet, at the same moment, certain actresses had achieved more legitimacy than ever before. They enjoyed a more stable income, mingled with royalty and aristocrats, and posed for portraits by the leading artists of the day.<sup>21</sup>

In addition, Engel argues, “Eighteenth-century audiences’ fascination with actresses suggests that female celebrities had the potential to disrupt, revise, and reinvent traditional models of female identities by calling into question the relationship between authenticity and theatricality central to ideas about desirable femininity both on- and off stage.”<sup>22</sup> Although Engel’s groundbreaking work identifies late eighteenth-century women as celebrities, I argue that for theatre women, fame and celebrity culture actually began one hundred years earlier during the rule of Charles II and was thus well-established as a phenomenon by the late eighteenth century. Further, I argue that the earlier performances of actresses like Nell Gwyn, Anne Marshall, Elizabeth Barry, and Anne Bracegirdle, and the plays of authors like Aphra Behn, and Susanna Centlivre helped establish strategies and traditions for self-representation that were adopted by subsequent generations of

women involved with theatre. These provided their successors with standards that allowed them to craft their own public and private personas. In so doing, they contributed to the cult of celebrity by the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>23</sup>

Anglophone women involved with theatre who traveled during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries acted as controversial arbiters of culture and social norms, though actresses who spoke the words of others were less socially contested than women playwrights who challenged society as female intellectuals.<sup>24</sup> Even so, actresses' personas both reinforced and contributed to Anglophone cultural tastes, desires and anxieties. The liberty of adopting various personas in order to (literally) embody a large number of character types . provided actresses agency that allowed them to connect with audiences and in turn helped audiences connect with the greater Anglophone world.<sup>25</sup> Traveling transatlantically, actresses became cultural ambassadors who translated cultural desires, tastes and expectations from place to place. Their status as celebrities afforded them agency and gave them a way to connect with disparate audience members. Through such cultural exchanges actresses even unintentionally engaged in a form of cultural diplomacy as they entertained audiences throughout the Atlantic region with the latest fashions, hair styles, and slang.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, their position as celebrities was confining. Their role as popular cultural icons meant that their every move onstage and off (particularly for London actresses) was discussed, criticized, lauded, copied. Thus celebrity actresses became subjects for gossip which reinforced their popularity but at a price. The more popular an actress, the more the public wanted to know everything about them, which in turn fed into their popularity. Their images were sold, cartoons of them appeared in newspapers and publications, and their objectification as social icons both opened and closed doors for them.

Cheryl Wanko, like Engel, locates the commodification of the celebrity with the rise of popularity of actor biographies and the growth of book culture during the mid eighteenth century. Wanko explores the sexualization of actresses and locates fame within the framework of their physical and social appeal as they are portrayed in biography.<sup>27</sup> Kristina Staub also examines the

sexualization of performers but she argues that audiences acted as the instigator of gendered stereotypes controlling sexual meaning. For Staub, male and female performers were criticized alike by the spectator/audience, whom she identifies overwhelmingly as male-gendered. Staub argues that the performer regardless of gender was subjugated and sexualized by the “gaze” of the audience/spectator resulting in a complicated evocation of gender issues including homophobia, deviance, homoeroticism, female subjugation, the feminizing of male performers and the desire of the (male gendered) audience to control performers through their responses. Yet, while Staub argues that sexual politics developed significantly during the eighteenth century, giving rise to gendered roles of male as spectator and women as spectacles, I would contend that these specific gender and identity struggles had their roots in late seventeenth-century theatre, particularly at the moment when women took the stage and began displacing previously popular female impersonators. In addition, women seized the opportunity to take on cross-dressing roles themselves and appeared in breeches roles that showed off their figures to advantage, tantalized male audience members with their otherwise forbidden physical form, and, not surprisingly, remained popular as a trope through the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>28</sup>

In *Gender Trouble: Feminism and Subversion of Identity* (1990), Judith Butler<sup>29</sup> argues that gender and sexuality are socially and culturally constructed and serve as a form of cultural performance. Butler’s claim supports my argument that seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Anglophone men and women “performed” culturally constructed interpretations of gender that included an intriguing gender/sexuality fluidity that was really not present in everyday society. Further, following Butler’s claim that gender as socially constructed, I argue along the same lines, gender constructions were more fluid within the theatre and allowed women to experiment with who they could be, rather than who they should be, and their performances were further reflected back to the audience. Even after the first Anglophone actresses appeared, replacing female impersonators, cross-dressing for both men and women in theatre continued to be popular, suggesting that theatre was a unique place where gender worked outside social definitions of

“male” and “female” and allowed performers to show people how they could act rather than how they should act.

It is interesting to note that the appearance of actresses on the Restoration Stage appears in tandem with a shift in public concepts of womanhood. Donald D. Hall addresses the advent of Anglophone actresses on the Restoration stage and posits that, “the visible ‘signs’ of gender reflect and work to control our worldviews...[as the] heroine struggles for self-determination and self-expression, crises of gender definition may be displayed in ‘body language,’ in changes of clothing and adornment, and in physical reflections of the larger social battles that she wages.”<sup>30</sup> These performances that allowed women to assume the clothing and habits of the “other” provided actresses with a degree of female agency and gendered fluidity not allowed women offstage. It was not unknown for actresses to perform as male characters in breeches roles who then “cross-dressed” as female characters before returning to their “male” persona.<sup>31</sup> Thus performed transvestitism both objectified women *and* gave women power and voice (of men) they otherwise were not allowed in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Anglophone society. Played out onstage, the evolution of gendered performances that appear simultaneously along with the introduction of Anglophone actresses in the mid seventeenth century transformed theatre into a complicated menagerie of gendered and genderless characters wearing the external markings of an assumed gender that justified their actions.<sup>32</sup>

The idea of fluid gender transference onstage also reflects the heightened interest in public sexuality that appealed to Charles II’s court. Sexuality during the mid to late seventeenth century was much less restrictive (a social and cultural phenomenon present in the court of Charles II that in turn filtered down to Britain’s various social classes) than it was during the mid to late eighteenth century.<sup>33</sup> In Aphra Behn’s *The Rover; Or, The Banish’t Cavaliers* (1677) for example, female characters cross-dress so that they can wield guns (weapons associated with men and male violence), and appear in costume as “gypsies” in order to present a freer characterization of female sexual awareness and availability.<sup>34</sup> *The Rover* presents three distinct

“roles” available to Restoration women (placed as it was within the context of libertinism and royalism, and within the social, moral and political turmoil of the mid-1670s): the good wife, the intellectual scholar/nun and the wily prostitute. Female characters in *The Rover* struggle to assert their femininity, independence, and desire to control their own fates and they change clothing onstage so that they can literally change roles (both traditional and gendered) suggesting to the audience that these normative social constructions are just that *social* constructions that can be taken off just as they can be put on.

Several historians have commented on social and cultural changes in the Anglophone transatlantic region during the seventeenth century, noting how women’s bodies and their words became commodified even as they presented meaningful social and political commentary on changing Anglophone culture. Historian Elizabeth Howe presents an exhaustive account of actresses who participated in Restoration Theatre in her work, *The First English Actresses: Women and Drama 1660–1700*. Howe suggests that the transition from employing male actors exclusively for female roles to theatres hiring female actresses was risky for theatres. Female impersonators were familiar to and adored by Anglophone audiences—there was no reason for British audiences to look for replacements. Actresses, on the other hand, were poorly trained (at the very beginning most British actresses simply had to appear onstage as an exotic phenomenon), and lacked the professionalism of female impersonators. Actresses needed to convince theatre managers that they were more than temporary trend, that they were at least as beautiful as female impersonators, and that they would be a financial draw and economic benefit to theatres. Thus actresses likely marketed themselves by promoting their bodies and their offstage intrigues in order to convince audiences and theatre managers that they were *women* performing publicly.

Will Pritchard argues in *Outward Appearances: The Female Exterior in Restoration London* that men were conflicted as to their reactions of first seeing women performing publicly. While actresses had appeal to men who liked the idea of seeing women parade their bodies

onstage, men also denigrated the actual performances of actresses in their desire to objectify and ogle women's bodies.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, Karen Newman in *Fashioning Femininity and English Renaissance Drama*, argues that actresses' bodies were subject to political and economic renderings that manifested themselves in extensive visual media, suggesting that "gender [was] used, or alternatively, effaced, in the service of so-called political interests."<sup>36</sup> According to Newman, Elizabethan and Jacobean England "fashioned" both male/female gender constructs with the spectacle of the theatre contributing to the management of femininity and in part, women's subjection to men.<sup>37</sup>

Evidence suggests that actresses and actors received similar approval from audience with some audiences even preferring actresses to their leading men.<sup>38</sup> Charlotte Charke (1713-1760, a noted transvestite who happily dressed in breeches offstage and who adopted the male persona of Charles Brown) became theatre manager of the Little Theatre in Haymarket after Henry Fielding's departure. In addition, along with the rise of successful actresses came better documentation of both players and playwrights and the rise of commercial theatre. Because audiences now came to see specific actresses perform, all performers were now advertised in print as "named" players, and plays were identified and acknowledged by playwrights.<sup>39</sup> This phenomenon of acknowledgement of performers and performances was far less common before the seventeenth century in Britain. I would argue that it was brought about by the introduction of women into professional theatre, the commercialization of theatre itself, and theatre managers' desire to draw audiences for a profit.

Women playwrights solidified the cultural connection between Britain and America, mitigated political differences of the period, and also challenged social, political, and cultural assumption connecting American and Britain. Looking for example at one of Britain's most successful and recognized playwrights, Aphra Behn's (1640-1689), beginning in the last quarter of the seventeenth century, Behn's plays debuted with great success at the Dorset Garden Theatre, which, under Lady Davenant's management, reigned as London's most influential and popular

theatre. Behn's success as a playwright, the public's acceptance of her acknowledged work and the recognition of (and public acceptance of) Behn's identity as a female author, encouraged subsequent women playwrights to risk public censure. Studies on Behn's life and work most often laud her as a protofeminist whose plays and novels became templates from which subsequent women writers drew inspiration. I would argue that to compartmentalize Behn as a protofeminist limits her scope, understanding, and representation of gender politics in Restoration England in her plays. She certainly acted in some ways as a protofeminist in laying out the groundwork for how later women playwrights could and would write for the stage, but her plays were likely not written as examples for other women to follow but simply as works she hoped her audiences would pay to see.

Behn's plays also provide useful insights into how women saw themselves in late seventeenth-century British society, and how gender limited but did not exclude them from participating. Thus, if we consider Behn's works just as women's writings rather than as work that arose from the late seventeenth century we miss important conversations about late seventeenth-century gender identity and gendered interactions.<sup>40</sup>

In addition, labeling these early women writers as "feminist" complicates their narratives undeservedly. Yet if the term feminist is restrictive, aspects of understanding how these early women writers wrote or participated in theatre and in the greater social order can nonetheless be illuminated by reading through a lens of socialist feminist theory. Thus, borrowing from socialist feminism in order to examine the works of these early women playwrights allows insights to be adapted to this study. For example, seeing how "power relations based on class interact with power relations based on gender... Socialist feminism recognizes that there are times and issues over which solidarity between women can cut across class cultural barriers, but it also recognizes the importance of struggles based on class, which necessarily involve men, and that women can have important differences among themselves, based on class difference."<sup>41</sup> Donald E. Hall argues, for example, that "Feminism has been greatly enriched by the recognition that dramatic

class divergences exist among women and that an analysis of women's experiences of oppression cannot be neatly divorced from an analysis of capitalism and class oppression...While there is considerable disagreement among feminists interested in issues of class about whether class or gender should receive primary critical emphasis in a given reading...Critics ask questions such as: What class tensions exist in the text under scrutiny? How do economic worries and the effects of specific material deprivations exacerbate gender-related tensions?"<sup>42</sup> Women playwrights placed females on their stages, female characters who crossed social, cultural and gender boundaries and challenged social views on how women should (literally and figuratively) act. Yet even as they wrote to please audiences, female playwrights were writing in real time and had to recognize the social limits imposed upon them by the audience will.

Behn, a staunch royalist, embraced the libertinism lauded by Charles II's court. What she didn't like, and what she commented on in *The Rover*, was the fact that women were excluded from the public conversation on sexual experimentation and awareness. Even if her plays do not stand up completely to "protofeminist" dissection, they should be seen as the work of a strong-minded, keenly observant author who wished for greater gender equality. Behn's plays were both publicly recognized and popularly performed during her lifetime, and served to encourage future generations of women playwrights to risk their own reputations in attempt writing for the stage just as Behn had. Some of these playwrights, including Delarivier Manley (1663/1670-1724), Susanna Centlivre (1667/1670-1723), Catherine Trotter Cockburn (1674-1749), and Eliza Haywood (1693-1756), rose to become some of the most prolific and influential playwrights in the transatlantic Anglophone world (see Appendices A-C). These early Anglophone actresses, playwrights and women theatre managers helped Anglophone women throughout the transatlantic world stay connected with each other.

While women in theatre became an important force in Britain during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, theatre was struggling to establish its legitimacy and social importance

in colonial America. Walter Meserve's intellectual history of American drama examines theatre's development through the lens of nationalism. Meserve explores how drama reflected attitudes and ideas of Americans, particularly post-Revolution as the country developed. He argues that drama can be used to observe American educational, religious and cultural history. My work uses this manner of understanding theatre as an important cultural lens through which to view eighteenth-century American and British transatlantic society, but my focus is on the cultural awareness women translated through their participating in theatre. Meserve finds the period of nationalism in America (1787-1828) of particular interest, during which time, he argues, drama often featured national and political themes.<sup>43</sup> I would also argue that as women playwrights in America began to emerge, they embraced themes important to national and political identity both because they were caught up in contemporary debates and because they saw these themes as important in defining the role of women in this changed and changing society.

Meserve's views of American drama in light of its nationalistic tendencies reflect similar views to those in Arthur Hobson Quinn's *A History of the American Drama from the Beginning to the Civil War*; Garff B. Wilson's *Three Hundred Years of American Drama and Theatre*; and Hugh F. Rankin's *The Theatre in Colonial America*.<sup>44</sup> Rankin in particular presents American theatre in light of the constant struggle of players to establish the legitimacy of theatre and the levels of diplomacy that theatre managers (namely Lewis Hallam, Sr., and David Douglass before the Revolution) employed when negotiating (whether it be with religious or civil authorities) for the right to perform or build playhouses in order for their acting companies to survive. Certainly, while theatre companies did struggle to survive with limited American audiences and large distances between urban centers in which they often performed, theatre never disappeared altogether, even when Congress prohibited public performances. Eighteenth-century American audiences were culturally connected with theatre in its many shapes (publicly performed, privately staged, published, read aloud, even discussed in local papers) both as a form of entertainment and as a place in which important social, political and cultural conversations took

place, even those individuals opposed to theatre on religious or moral grounds. Rankin's interest in theatre lies in the earliest period of American drama, 1716-1774. He observes theatre as a cultural expression derived from the social and political turmoil pulling at eighteenth-century American society and argues that theatre had to contend with both intellectual and religious forces to thrive.

Theatre historian Odai Johnson takes issue both with the nationalistic nature of American theatre and with the idea that colonial audiences perpetually resisted theatre in any form, particularly live performances. Johnson argues instead that American theatre was not as contested as previously thought and that theatre in America was at least tolerated if not unilaterally accepted. I would agree with Johnson's assessment and suggest that Anglo Americans were culturally connected with Britain, and that theatre was at the heart of this cultural connection. Johnson suggests further that what may be read as disparagement of theatre might actually be interpreted as theatrical awareness. Johnson suggests the absence of performances of Mercy Otis Warren's plays shows not so much a Colonial intolerance of theatre as it does an American/Bostonian awareness of theatre as a medium of communication that served as an important cultural tool for staging public (and private) social and political discourse.<sup>45</sup> In discussing absences in theatre history where material evidence is missing (such as audience reactions, the writings and memoirs of actresses or child actors, the very performances themselves, or even the names of important performers), we should be wary of using these absences as proof that Americans disapproved of theatre. Rather we should consider that by century's end America boasted major theatre centers in Boston, Philadelphia, Charleston and New York; that women playwrights like Mercy Otis Warren, Susanna Rowson, Sarah Pogsom Smith, and Mary Carr published and/or produced popular works about important social and political issues in America, and that English actresses like Sarah Siddons' sister, Elizabeth Whitlock, of the famous Kemble acting family flocked to America as celebrities. America by 1800 had not only learned to embrace theatre, it had become a theatrical destination.

*In Theatre and Empire: A History of Assumptions in the English-Speaking Atlantic World, 1700-1860*, Douglas S. Harvey echoes Johnson's views of theatrical tolerance in America and even grapples with the qualifications of different types of theatre (i.e., legitimate, high drama, low spectacle) arguing that all types of theatre of the period should be considered "legitimate." Examining the relationship between performance and empire, Harvey contends "that theatre primarily served the needs of empire in the English-speaking Atlantic world from the beginnings of British expansion up to the American Civil War."<sup>46</sup> Harvey suggests that following the American Revolution evenings at the theatre "included a drama followed by an 'entre-act' (song, dance, skit) and an afterpiece, which was usually a farce that featured buffoonery, low-comedy and crudely drawn characters. In fact, "low spectacle" performances like farces began to take over a significant market share of the stage in America after the Revolution, foreshadowing melodramatic performances that would become popular by the nineteenth century. This process [Harvey calls] the 'democratization' of empire" which "[began] to bring together the idea of imperial expansion, driven by the prospect of individual material gain, and traditional folk culture, creating a syncretic culture that assuaged the cognitive dissonances of empire."<sup>47</sup> Harvey further argues that as economic markets increased in the British Empire, so did "the push for national expansion, and such demand was reflected in theater performances."<sup>48</sup> Thus the desire to identify with Englishness was reflected in cultural translations that included theater, as Kathleen Wilson also suggests.<sup>49</sup> Likewise, theatre acting as a form of social art influenced performers and audiences while American audiences often contested theatre on its national importance, moral grounds, and ability to corrupt or enlighten audiences.<sup>50</sup> In the meantime, plays performed in London during the last decades of the eighteenth century rarely referred to the ongoing social and political battles with America, before, during or after the American Revolution, suggesting that British audiences were less interested in transatlantic political commentary than in enjoying an evening's entertainment.<sup>51</sup>

During the 1780s and 1790s, Anglophone women playwrights consistently wrote comedies about the universality of the human experience, focusing on domestic interactions. They provided audiences with stock characters—the kind-hearted (or heartbreakingly naïve) ingénues, tragic heroines forced to act because of dire circumstances, the eccentric and insightful crone, the witty and sharp-tongued but unmarried daughter or widow. Their words (albeit the words of others) and their actions helped audiences on both sides of the Atlantic forget about the war that produced a political divide between Britain and America. Because theatre women often lived on the leading edge of cultural acceptance, only a few Anglophone women playwrights during this time on either side of the Atlantic dared to comment on contentious political issues. Doing so risked appearing unfeminine and challenging patriarchal authority, as well as potentially undercutting economic profit.<sup>52</sup>

Faye Dudden argues that late-eighteenth century white women saw in theatre a profitable and socially accepted career that accommodated at least to some degree motherhood and women's participation in social and political debates. Yet at the same time, because of the marketplace and commercial nature of theatre, actresses became increasingly objectified, judged more by their physical appearance than by their performances and voices.<sup>53</sup> Interestingly, this objectification of actresses (according to Dudden) occurred at the same time that actresses begin to reach celebrity status in the United States. While Dudden locates the start of professional theatre in America in 1790, ignoring significant contributions to social, cultural and political changes that occurred in America as a direct result of the influence of theatre prior to this period (and suggesting that “American” theatre was not “American” until the formal formation of the United States), I argue that professional theatre was already well-established with the coming of the Hallams to America in 1752. In fact Dudden's own understanding of “commercial” theatre, which she argues begins in 1790, seems in fact to be located at this earlier time period as well since as the very definition of commerce means an exchange of goods, commodities or services

(as well as intellectual interchange). The London Company certainly exchanged performances for economic benefits.<sup>54</sup>

Looking at women's progress in theatre from Margaret Cavendish through Sarah Siddons suggests that women involved with theatre succeeded as Mary Anne Schofield and Cecelia Macheski suggest "because of the struggles women endured in order to establish themselves in the theater system that was dominated by men and patronage."<sup>55</sup> From the writings of Margaret Cavendish and Aphra Behn to the celebrity status of performers such as Sarah Siddons, Elizabeth Inchbald and Elizabeth Whitlock, "women molded the taste of the age and carved out in the theater one of the few available opportunities for independence and renown...these women endured insults, seductions, and rapes, but unlike their scribbling sisters [novelists] whose celebrity and survival depended upon a printed text, the women of the theater faced the demands and frequently the humiliation of public scrutiny not only of their words but of their bodies."<sup>56</sup> Theatre historian William Hazlitt proclaimed in 1816 of Sarah Siddons, "The homage she has received is greater than that which is paid to Queens...She raised Tragedy to the skies, or brought it down from thence."<sup>57</sup> Pat Rogers also argues that Siddons was adored because of her combination of talent and irreproachable private life.<sup>58</sup> That Siddons achieved a level of fame and fortune before then unknown to women involved with theatre (excepting of course actresses who married aristocrats or were the mistresses of nobility) certainly supports the majority of historians who argue for the establishment of the "cult of celebrity" around 1800. Yet I still maintain that the tradition by which Siddons rose to fame was well established at least a century before she began appearing onstage. Still, the public scrutiny actresses and women playwrights experienced and which allowed these women levels of success, attention, devotion and fame was unknown to any other group of women outside of the aristocracy, and certainly becoming a celebrity was not without risk.

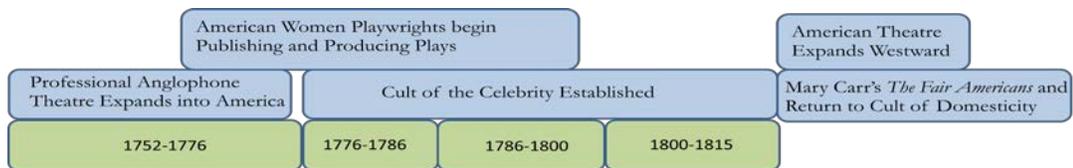
Ultimately as a group, Anglophone theatre women provide a unique point of view for understanding social and cultural attitudes and changes taking place at the end of the eighteenth

century throughout the transatlantic Anglophone world. Actresses challenged Anglophone society's moral values. They took the stage in breeches roles, baring their legs and presenting themselves as physically malleable characters. They suffered criticism for their performances and their bodies. They traveled. They became part of new communities and were sometimes shut out from others. They took risks, exposing themselves and their vulnerabilities in front of people who judged their looks, their acting skills, and their social acceptability. Women playwrights working in a predominantly male world wrote plays that supported traditional women's roles as wives, sisters, mothers and daughters. Public performances could (and often did) inform audiences, and reflected contemporary social attitudes. Women playwrights risked public censure by attaching their names to their words. Indeed, simply the act of writing, publishing and producing plays challenged society's views of what women were allowed to do. Yet this adherence to contemporary social expectations of women (albeit presented by women whose actions challenged those same social expectations) allowed the post-Revolutionary transatlantic Anglophone world to remain connected socially and culturally, and may be one of the most important aspects of late-eighteenth-century Anglophone women's involvement with theatre. For the most part, eighteenth-century actresses and women playwrights did not challenge the paternalistic and patriarchal system in which they lived. In addition, Anglophone theatre in general reflected the hegemonic or dominant features of late eighteenth-century society (in particular those values, views, and practices that became more dominant, often because of the nature of power structures). While audiences were willing to give voice to women's words as actresses and playwrights, the greater Anglophone public was not entirely supportive of women instigating change.

The period 1752-1807 was chosen to best showcase the talents of British and American actresses and women playwrights in the face of their transatlantic interactions during the Revolutionary Era. This period of turmoil changed theatre—who performed, what was performed, where it was performed—in the transatlantic world, just as theatre in turn participated

in social, political, cultural and even economic transformations taking place in the transatlantic Anglophone world.<sup>59</sup> Regardless of when and where they wrote or performed women involved with theatre shared a common British cultural awareness and understanding (perhaps as imperial subjects with subjectivity dependent upon when and where they were raised and lived) even if they were born or raised in environments outside of Britain.<sup>60</sup> Separated by an ocean, by war, and by differences in political ideology, British and American audiences enjoyed shared experiences through theatrical performances. Ultimately, late eighteenth century Anglophone theatre acted as a political rapprochement that kept America and Britain connected by reinforcing undeniable cultural bonds that had existed for centuries and women were an important part of reconciliation and connection.

### Period Under Consideration



**Figure 1.1** Key phases in the development of transatlantic Anglophone women's theatre, 1752-1815.

The goal of this dissertation is to examine both the long-term history of women in theatre from the 1660s onward and the birth of transatlantic Anglophone theatre during the Revolutionary Era (1752-1815). The latter period was selected for five primary reasons: the rise of women playwrights in Britain, in rise of the 'cult of celebrity' in Britain and its translation to America post Revolution, the importance of theatre and people involved with theatre in transatlantic cultural diplomacy, the socio-political importance of theatre during this period transatlantically, and the influence of theatre in helping define American and British identity. While the focus of this work examines Anglophone theatre in the transatlantic world between

1752 and 1800, it is important to establish how women came to participate in theatre in 1660 and how quickly they became integral to theatre's success transatlantically. Following our investigation of Restoration Theatre and the introduction of women to theatre in Britain in 1660, we move forward almost a century to the year 1752, which marks the appearance of the first successful professional acting company in British North America with the arrival of Lewis Hallam Sr., and his London Company of Comedians in Yorktown, Virginia, and a moment when theatre was first used as cultural diplomacy.<sup>61</sup>

The latter half of the eighteenth century also saw an increase in the number of Anglophone women playwrights. In 1758, America's first publicly acknowledged woman playwright, Charlotte Lennox (although arguably also British since she had moved to London) published her play, *Philander* in London, followed by *The Sister* (1762) and *Old City Manners* (1775). Playwrights Hannah Cowley and Elizabeth Inchbald produced their plays, mostly popular social comedies.<sup>62</sup> American playwrights in general may have been less constrained than their British counterparts in openly discussing contentious social and political issues restricted by the Theatrical Licensing Act of 1737.<sup>63</sup> In the 1770s Mercy Otis Warren published her political polemics in newspapers, and during the last decade of the eighteenth century and the first decade of the nineteenth century, Susanna Rowson (1790s), Judith Sargent Murray (1790s), Sarah Pogson (1800s) and Mary Carr (1810s) each published plays that commented on American values, revolution, or a the place for women in this new world order.<sup>64</sup>

Between the end of the Seven Years' War in 1763 and the end of the century actresses on both sides of the Atlantic gained social importance and acceptance. Their images were reproduced for public consumption, particularly in Britain where likenesses of actresses could be purchased as prints, ceramic figurines or on tiles. Their escapades onstage and off became fodder for public gossip, and were reprinted in newspapers and pamphlets. The tone inside theatres and the relationship between audience and performers also began to change during this period resulting in a shift from active participant to passive spectatorship as suggested by Jennifer Hall-

Witt in *Fashionable Acts: Opera and Elite Culture in London, 1780-1880*.<sup>65</sup> For much of the eighteenth century, Anglophone theatre drew a lively crowd. Audience members would cheer their favorite performers, hiss at sub-par performances and riots occasionally broke out. However a shift in participation and audience performance began toward the end of the eighteenth century and beginning of the nineteenth century. Focusing on the opera house in London as “the home of London High Society,” Hall-Witt argues that “the transformation of audience behavior—from the chatty, performative spectatorship of the 1780s to the more quiet, polite listening of the 1870s—occurred in large part because of changed in how the upper class conducted itself at the opera as commercialization forces eroded the opera’s subscription system and as elite culture was itself reformed.”<sup>66</sup> Hall-Witt also suggests that during the early Georgian Era (1714-1830 under British rule by Kings George I-IV), “the imaginary barrier separating the stage from the auditorium, which informs the modern theatre experience, was only in its infancy. Spectators were often seated onstage, allowing the stage to serve as an extension of the auditorium, but the reverse was also true. With the lights kept up in the auditorium throughout the evening, the spectacle in the pit and boxes was one of the evening’s central attractions. Noblewomen dressed in formal gowns and expensive jewels perched themselves in their boxes while noblemen and dandies wandered from box to box, paying tribute to the female leaders of High Society... Aristocrats came to the opera to collect the latest gossip, assess the fashionable world, and put themselves on display.”<sup>67</sup> The fact that British audience members were allowed to sit onstage during performances for much of the eighteenth century (though less so in America) suggests that they accepted their role as part of the spectacle and aristocrats understood themselves to be part of the performance resulting in the blurred lines between reality and fantasy.

The expectations of what it meant to be in the audience changed from 1660 to 1800, also suggesting the elevation of actresses performing onstage above audiences watching (literally and figuratively) from below.<sup>68</sup> Hall-Witt also argues that audience members acted as both “performers” and “observers.” They participated in the performance by applauding, hissing or

rioting and their “dress, demeanor, and activities” were observed by other members of the audience while they in turn watched both performers onstage and other theatregoers. As audience members were literally removed from the stage (David Garrick prohibited audiences sitting onstage by 1762) their participation as “performers” became less pronounced though people still attended theatre to see and be seen. And along with technological improvements in lighting that allowed theatre lights to dim during performances, the onstage performance itself took precedence and left the audience enshrouded in the obscurity of near darkness.<sup>69</sup>

Looking particularly at women performers, Faye Dudden examines conflicting ideas portrayed by actresses onstage of what it meant to be a woman both as object and as entrepreneur in her study, *Women in the American Theatre: Actresses and Audiences 1790-1870*. American audiences, according to Dudden, responded to actresses onstage during the early national period but even though women found opportunities in theatre, theatre, as it transformed from an aural experience to a visual experience, eventually transformed women into objects and visual spectacles with a focus on women’s bodies rather than on their skills as performers.<sup>70</sup> Ultimately, theatre became a crucible of celebrity-ness. By setting up a model for a set of behaviors that the average woman could hope to achieve, celebrities presented a more complicated relationship with the world around them than those women in the audience experienced. In addition, actresses contributed to the production of cultural illusions about femininity (carried by celebrities) that in turn affected women who are not celebrities. On the one hand I argue, celebrities seemed able to get away with more extreme behaviors (sexual affairs, for instance), but on the other hand, they functioned as an *Other* against which some gender norms were defined, in particular the idea of the respectable woman vs. the actress. Actresses showed women both how to behave (fashion and hair styles, social interactions) and how not to behave (dressing up in men’s clothing and acting or speaking with male authority, engaging in sexual intrigues onstage and off). Indeed actresses may have had little control over their social reception and the question of agency becomes even more complicated when one considers whether actresses were responsible for their performances,

or whether the playwright (who projects ideas through dialogue), the public (including the press who projects interpretation dependent on social status, location, and time), determined their impact on society. Indeed, it is also possible to consider how the various power structures (imperial formations, patriarchy, class structures, etc.) are also implicated in the question of actress agency.

Theatre celebrities emerged, engaging public interest by presenting audiences with an air of mystique previously possessed by monarchy. I suggest something that previous scholars have been remiss to address, that the absence of recognized royalty in post-revolutionary American society may have been filled by the ‘theatrical royalty.’ Given the dislike of George III in the American colonies, the importance of royalty as a presence in America may be problematic for American audiences’ and may have eventually given way to Revolutionary War heroes and political leaders by century’s end such as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams. Lacking royal and aristocratic role models who had formerly served as social arbiters of Anglo taste and culture in this post-revolutionary world, Americans sought to create their own version of celebrated royalty, which began to include actresses. Famous British actresses who toured America in the 1790s and 1800s provided just the right amount of emotional, social and cultural connection with British sensibilities that American audiences in the post-revolutionary decades desired.<sup>71</sup>

Actresses were more approachable and easier to emulate than the previously adored royal figures and yet they, too, carried an air of mystique that elevated them above their audiences. They were beautiful, mysterious, clever, confident, and they reinvented themselves through their performances. They boldly appeared in public and they generated gossip offstage and the tension between actresses’ public personas as celebrities and the roles they played was often significant. Ultimately actresses gave women a sense of the possibilities available to them and women playwrights contributed to the creation of possibilities for women by vocalizing their own

political views and creating female characters who helped give shape to British and American national identity.

### **Contributions**

Although the Revolutionary Era colors the social, political and cultural responses theatre women experienced, the primary focus of this investigation, while limited in its scope by necessity, is to examine how Anglophone women involved with theatre helped maintain social, cultural and political connections in the expanding Anglophone world.<sup>72</sup> During the course of this work I examine thirty-three plays and two novels that add significant insight into the cultural contributions that eight women playwrights from England, America and the British Caribbean made during the long eighteenth century: Aphra Behn, Susanna Centlivre, Mercy Otis Warren, Hannah Cowley, Susanna Rowson, Elizabeth Inchbald, Sarah Pogson Smith, and Mary Carr.<sup>73</sup> These plays written over a period of 150 years serve as evidence of the attitudes and expectations of women who were influenced by extraordinary and tumultuous changes taking place in their worlds just as they acted as cultural diplomats to share Anglo attitudes, culture and politics. I chose to limit the number of texts in an effort to understand the depth of change and contribution Anglophone women made on theatre before 1800 rather than the breadth of styles, themes, characters, even quality of work women produced or performed in during this period. I analyze the materiality and immateriality of their work as oral tradition (including performances, audience responses, actresses, venues) literary tradition (including published plays, newspaper advertisements, plays used in other literary forms like novels, journal entries describing actresses and performances), and material culture (published plays, newspaper advertisements, prints and portraits of actresses in character, ceramic figurines of actresses, actress influence on women's fashion). Examining Anglophone theatre of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in this light as oral and literary tradition and in light of the important material culture that emerged from

women's involvement with theatre during this period is unique in theatre studies to date and provides a more complete understanding of the importance and influence of these women on social, cultural and political changes taking place in transatlantic Anglophone society.

Along with looking at these eight Anglophone women playwrights, I examine the performances, travels and cultural influence of fifteen Anglophone actresses who were born, lived and performed in England, Ireland, Wales, the British Caribbean, and America during the long eighteenth century. These actresses were chosen because they exhibited significant transatlantic experiences or influence, particularly in the crafting of the cult of celebrity on a transatlantic scale. Among these actresses who influenced performances and experiences of transatlantic Anglophone actresses to follow were eight seventeenth-century actresses: Nell Gwynne, Ann and Rebecca Marshall, Elizabeth Barry, Anne Bracegirdle, Betty Mackerel, Elizabeth Boutell, Mary Saunderson Betterton. Eighteenth-century actresses who either traveled and performed transatlantically or had significant influence on the cultivation of celebrity status for actresses that influenced transatlantic Anglophone culture include: Mrs. Lewis Hallam, Sr. (later Mrs. David Douglass), Isabella Hallam Mattocks, Ann Hallam Barrington, Nancy Hallam, Margaret Cheer, Maria Storer, Susanna Rowson, Elizabeth Whitlock (and to a lesser degree her younger sister, Ann Hatton), Georgina Sides Oldmixon, Anne Oldfield, Anne Tuke (later Mrs. Lewis Hallam, Jr.), Sarah Siddons, Elizabeth Inchbald, Frances Abington and Elizabeth Farren. While public performances, like lost plays, cannot be recovered, they can be reconstructed through others' observations. For example, one may not know precisely what the voices of Nell Gwyn, Susanna Centlivre, Elizabeth Inchbald or Susanna Rowson sounded like or even the quality of their performances, but one can recover the essence of their careers through their contemporaries' comments, salaries they commanded, roles performed and length of their careers, where they performed, with whom they performed.

To uncover the significance of Anglophone theatre women as transmitters of Anglophone culture, this thesis includes newspaper advertisements of plays and performances and critiques of

these performances. These newspaper commentaries illuminate the social, political and cultural contexts in which these performances took place and suggest how actresses became essential, recognizable, and significant cultural diplomats throughout the transatlantic Anglophone world. The Burney Collection at the British Library houses several papers that present eighteenth-century theatre commentary in Britain, Ireland and colonial America: the *Daily Courant* (London's first daily newspaper 1702-1735), the *London Gazette* (beginning 1665 with some interesting early theatre articles on actresses), the *London Chronicle* (1757-1823), the *London Evening Post* (1727-1797), the *Dublin Intelligence*, and *The General Advertiser*, a New York newspaper, the same paper that published the *Federalist Papers*. The *London Gazette* and *London Chronicle* contain the most useful theatre information listing plays, performers and reviews. Eighteenth-century newspapers in British Colonial America that provide the most engaging theatre information include the *Virginia Gazette*, which contains performances and players in Lewis Hallam's original London Company of Comedians when they began performing in 1752; New York newspapers containing key theatre lists of performances and performers as well as critiques include the *New York Gazetteer*, the *Daily Advertiser*, the *Morning Post*, and *Daily Advertiser*, the *New York Gazette*; and the *Weekly Mercury*; and the *New York Gazette, or The Weekly Post-Boy*. Likewise, Philadelphia newspapers *The American weekly mercury*, the *General Advertiser*, the *Pennsylvania Evening Herald: and the American Monitor*, and *The Pennsylvania Gazette* present key information about contemporary theatrical events and performers.

Newspapers provide a wealth of information for theatre history including performance dates, cast member lists, ticket costs and options available for purchase, performance location, how much theatre managers were willing to spend on advertising (as seen in size and frequency of advertisements). They reflect the importance of print culture in helping to sustain theatre on a variety of levels from advertisements to editorials on performances and gossip about players. Newspapers also published plays in serial form, like Mercy Otis Warren's plays. This made plays even more affordable and accessible as newspapers traveled from coffee house to coffee

house, colony to colony, person to person. In addition, the timing in which these plays appeared in newspapers also becomes important when considering their coverage of other events and editorials that appear alongside them. Cumulatively, these various forms of print and material culture related to theatre reveal how women's performances and plays traveled transatlantically.

Just as newspapers carried information from one transatlantic location to another, so too did theatre groups carry with them cultural influences flavored by world events. Plays contained references to social and political challenges. Performances showcased characters formed through playwrights' experiences with everything from political conflict, to the growing nature of celebrity, and even scientific and technological innovation. World events generated transatlantic interest, particularly world-changing events like war. War, one of the most influential transatlantic events of the late eighteenth century, completely changed America and France and threatened to change British society as well. Thus certain comparisons between the American and the French Revolutions are obvious. The French Revolution certainly influenced and informed Anglophone theatre, just as contemporary discussions of the Revolution informed British society. Thus, examining how Anglophone women living through these incredibly volatile social and political upheavals envisioned society between 1790 and 1815 inform our understanding of the development of Anglophone theatre during this period and certainly reflect the influence of the French Revolution on Anglophone theatre more generally. In particular, women dramatists publicly presented their own interpretations of and thoughts on revolution, human rights and freedom, political and social issues often reserved for men and which threatened patriarchal control of social change.<sup>74</sup>

While not all of these actresses or women playwrights are remembered, their participation (whether anonymous or known) in theatre allowed for ideas and attitudes to be transferred from one area in the transatlantic Anglophone world to another. This transference of ideas reflected social, cultural and political changes in the transatlantic world but also provided a cultural bridge by which Britain and America remained culturally connected. Since most

seventeenth- and eighteenth-century women who worked in Britain and America did not record their thoughts or deeds, understanding just how these ideas were transferred through the writings and performances of theatre women as well as reimagining their experiences is a daunting task.

Many of the most relevant collections that I analyze for this study are found in the archives of the National Art Library and the Forster Collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, Society of Antiquaries in London, the Heinz Archive and Gallery associated with the National Portrait Gallery in London, the British Museum's Paul Hamlyn Library, the British Library's Literary and Theatrical Archive and Manuscript Collection, the Harvard Theatre Collection at the Houghton Library, the American Antiquarian Society, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the Library Company of Philadelphia and the Caribbean Collections at the Yale University Library and the Early Caribbean Digital Archive. Diaries and personal writings like letters that record theatre interactions are particularly intriguing because they provide impressions that are in the moment and thus yield more visceral reactions. Samuel Pepys, for example, writes about attending the theatre on 15 January 1668/69, "It is about my Lady Harvy's being offended at Doll Common's acting of Sempronia [in Ben Johnson's *Catiline*, 1611], to imitate her; for which she got my Lord Chamberlain, her kinsman, to imprison Doll: when my Lady Castlemayne made the King to release her, and to order her to act it again, and my Lady Harvy provided people to hiss her and fling oranges at her..."<sup>75</sup> Even though this seems a simple recording of an event it is rich with evidence. We learn that actresses liked to imitate their "betters" onstage—and the audience often knew of whom these portrayals were made. We learn that actresses were jailed if they offended, but that they also had influential friends who actually liked it when actresses mocked their aristocratic associates onstage. We learn that London theatre was a raucous environment where hissing and fruit flinging occurred and where audiences actively participated in performances.

Likewise, Abigail Adams, living in London as the wife of the first United States minister to the Court of St James, wrote a letter to Thomas Jefferson on 12 August 1785 curious about the

celebrity power of Sarah Siddons as an actress and her biases against British theatre more generally;

after having been accustomed to [*the theater*] of France, one can have little realish [sic] for the cold, heavy action, and uncouth appearance [sic] of the English stage. This would be considered as treason of a very black dye, but I speak as an American. I know not how a Siddons may reconcile me to English action but as yet I have seen nothing that equals Parissian [sic] ease and grace.<sup>76</sup>

Yet on 18 September 1785, after seeing Siddons perform again in *Othello*, Adams wrote a letter to her son-in-law, William Stephens Smith, she clearly seemed enamored of the Welsh actress (performing while pregnant no less) and invoked the poetry of Milton, “I was last Evening . . . at Drury Lane and Saw for the first time Mrs. Siddons. Grace was in all her steps heaven in her Eye/ And every Gesture dignity and love.”<sup>77</sup> Like Pepys diary entries, Adams’s letters provide more immediate and unfiltered responses to theatre and actress performances. Adams imagined theatre as a political space and her political leanings made her favor French theatre, even if to do so seemed “treasonous.” Of course she speaks “as an American,” which also suggests an assertion of her political separation from Britain while she maintained a cultural connection through theatre. Yet Siddons literally performs cultural diplomacy presenting a role with which Adams can identify and admire.

Other material culture that supports the idea of the formation of the cult of the celebrity for theatre women exists in portraiture. An actress could easily be acknowledged as attaining celebrity status if her portrait was made, especially if it was painted by an important artist. Nell Gwyn is associated with at least twenty-eight portraits, most of them commissioned by Charles II and several of them painted by Sir Peter Lely, the king’s principal painter. Eighteenth-century British actresses Dorothea Jordan, Mary Robinson (George IV’s mistress also known as “Perdita”), Lavinia Fenton, Isabella Mattocks, and Sarah Siddons each multiple portraits made of them that were in turn made into etchings and sketches that the average consumer might own and often were painted in character. In America, however, the practice of painting actresses was far

less common so when Charles Wilson Peale painted Nancy Hallam in the character of Imogen from Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* in 1771 at which point the idea of actress as celebrity appears to have been translated onto American soil.<sup>78</sup>

By examining the words and actions of theatre women and the words and responses of audiences who observed these women, this study shows how women throughout the Anglophone transatlantic world helped shape and inform theatre in their various environments and how women involved with theatre reflected contemporary society. This study also sheds light on how Anglophone women at the end of the eighteenth century contributed publicly in the socially and politically unstable transatlantic society. While some women playwrights and actresses participated in social and political dialogues in a real and very public manner, others more quietly maintained their professional lives and their lives in more traditional roles as wives, daughters, sisters, wives and aunts. This further suggests that being involved with theatre during the late eighteenth century did not, require women to be overtly vocal or challenge public ideals of the feminine or females.

While the question of how seventeenth and eighteenth century audiences imagined women is intriguing and serves to place later actresses in a more historical context, ultimately this work looks beyond simply examining the relationship between male audience member (observer) and female performer (object) and attempts to grant a degree of agency to actresses and women playwrights. Both men and women appeared onstage, men and women wrote plays during this period, and men and women were members of the audience. By using pairs or small groupings of actresses or playwrights from the same period but located in different places in the transatlantic Anglophone world, this study suggests the ways in which society was developing as reflected in plays and performances that occurred in each area and in the roles women took on by location and period. A comparative examination of what women said, wrote, performed and observed in the transatlantic world can tell us a great deal about how Anglophone women involved in various

aspects of theatre between 1752 and 1800 interpreted various social and political changes in society throughout the region.

### **Chapter Summaries**

This study begins with a discussion of Restoration Theatre (1660-1710), the entry of Anglophone women into the theatre under the auspices of King Charles II in 1660 and the period that I define as developing the cult of the celebrity. The writings and performances of the period's most influential actresses and playwrights show that these women established themselves as "legitimate" actresses and authors, challenged social and cultural boundaries, and achieved a level of fame that make them some of Britain's first recognizable celebrities outside nobility and aristocracy. Following this introduction (chapter one), chapter two describes the early development of performances and productions by women in British theatre from 1660 to 1752. My work argues that early actresses and women playwrights in Restoration theatre, in spite of significant social and cultural deterrents, fought to make a place for themselves in this male-dominated world. It addresses the political and social challenges women involved with theatre faced in their professional and daily lives. The risks they took, the levels of success they achieved, the cultural challenges and social capitulations they were willing to make established the behavior, performances and publications by which women were measured. Examining contemporary social, cultural, and political attitudes in Restoration and early eighteenth-century theatre suggests that these women became role models for subsequent actresses. Women theatre managers and playwrights similarly became standards by which later theatre women were measured.

In addition, chapter two argues that during this early period, Anglophone theatre became a place of empowerment for women. Ultimately, Restoration theatre and theatre helped change, for good or ill, the public persona of women in Anglophone society. Seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century women, particularly actresses, reaped economic benefits that included a steady

income and access to enter a variety of social classes. Many of these women, using either their beauty or their wits—or both—gained celebrity status and a public following that allowed them to change their social positions, and become king’s mistresses, duchesses, and wives of aristocrats. Likewise, theater women challenged the patriarchal theatre system and competed with men, voicing their opinions publicly in ways rarely allowed Anglophone women outside of theatre.<sup>79</sup> The actions, responses, and public displays both on and off stage of these early Anglophone theatre women, and their public acceptance and successes guaranteed subsequent generations of female thespians and playwrights a permanent place in theatre. Once women took the stage they refused to walk away.

Chapter three presents an overview of how Anglophone theatre was employed as a form of cultural diplomacy in the greater transatlantic world, particularly in America, between 1752 and 1772. As colonial America and the British Caribbean became wealthier and towns became more densely populated, performers began travelling more extensively throughout the transatlantic world. This chapter begins by examining the various acting troupes in America as a way to understand the eventual experiences of actresses and influence of women playwrights on the American stage. It looks at four particular groups that attempted to legitimize theatre: the Murray-Kean Company, Robert Upton’s Players, Lewis Hallam’s London Company of Comedians and David Douglass’s American Company. A comparative approach allows us to see both the variety of experiences (both shared and unique) Anglophone performers faced in the early years of American theatre and how difficult it was for theatre to become legitimate and accepted in (mostly rural) American society.

Chapter three also examines various factors at play in eighteenth-century America, including economic forces involved in establishing theatre, the moral reticence and licensing restrictions against which theatre companies fought, the use of Anglophone theatre as cultural and political diplomacy (particularly how Virginia Governor Robert Dinwiddie employed theatre for diplomacy), and how theatre and newspapers were both used in eighteenth-century America as

essential Anglophone modes of communication and entertainment.<sup>80</sup> As transatlantic trade and migration (forced and voluntary) increased and the eighteenth-century Anglophone world became more culturally and economically interconnected, theatre served as a way for British citizens at home and abroad to remain culturally connected. Mid-eighteenth-century Anglophone theatre established important social and cultural exchanges between performers and various American audience members. On several occasions theatre was enlisted as cultural diplomacy as subsequent chapters disclose. This chapter also looks at the acceptance of theatre in America before turning to a discussion of women's involvement as actresses, playwrights and audience members in transatlantic cultural diplomacy.

Chapter four provides a comparative examination of transatlantic theatre as it was experienced by four different women from the same acting family, and explores the growing cult of celebrity by looking at Ann Hallam Barrington, Isabella Hallam Mattocks, Nancy Hallam and Mrs. Hallam.<sup>81</sup> To date no study has examined these women together, comparing their transnational and transatlantic experiences onstage as actresses or examining their familial roles and connections. In fact, considering the levels of success these three women achieved, it seems extraordinary that they have not been given more scholarly attention. Basic information is available in *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers and Other Stage Personnel in London 1660-1800*.<sup>82</sup> While this *Biographical Dictionary* is thorough, engaging, and precise in its narrative about a significant number of people involved with theatre (from actors to stage managers, seamstresses, prompters, and dancers, for example) my own work reaches beyond the biographical contexts of these women to reveal their familial connections as performers and the scope of their achievements in their very different transatlantic worlds. My argument also suggests the importance of familial relations in crafting the cult celebrity status of these actresses as reflected in their portraiture, their performances and their social positions as actresses in various locations.<sup>83</sup>

Chapter five examines the period between 1770 and 1795 and compares two transatlantic Anglophone women playwrights who lived and wrote on either side of the Atlantic before and during the American Revolution: Mercy Otis Warren and Hannah Cowley.<sup>84</sup> This chapter argues that just as what and how women performed was reflected by where they lived and worked, the plays women wrote and the reasons why women wrote plays depended on their location within the transatlantic world, the period in which they wrote, and contemporary social, cultural and political upheavals each woman witnessed.<sup>85</sup> The works and experiences of these two women have not been previously juxtaposed, perhaps because their themes and subject matter were quite disparate. I argue that the writings of each of these women helped better define their nation's identity through their plays. For Warren, cultural diplomacy served to solidify relations between the colonies, which in turn aided the establishment of a transcolonial anti-British connection and the beginnings of a national identity.<sup>86</sup> Within colonial America, cultural diplomacy between colonies was not only active in the Revolutionary Era, it was an essential form of political engagement that allowed the thirteen original colonies to form social, cultural and political cohesion, and ultimately enabled the colonies to become one unified nation.<sup>87</sup> For Cowley, cultural diplomacy was also intra-national rather than transnational and her plays helped to define British nationhood and a sense of British identity that involved defining the role of Britons in everyday life.<sup>88</sup>

Chapter six (1792-1807) reflects again on the plays women wrote during a fifteen year period at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries in order to understand important social and cultural shifts in contemporary society and how women were beginning to stage political comments publicly. This chapter examines three women playwrights' responses to Revolution—American, French, and Haitian—and examines how violence in the face of war—enacted upon women, carried out by women, constantly threatening to be carried out on women—becomes the focus of three women playwrights who deliberately intended to use their work as a form of cultural diplomacy in showcasing how war affects women and reciprocally,

how women affect war. Perhaps because of the level of violence involved, of the three plays written by Elizabeth Inchbald, Susanna Rowson, and Sarah Pogson Smith, only Rowson's play, *Slaves in Algiers; or, The Struggle for Freedom* saw a wide audience in production and publication. This chapter compares *The Massacre* (1792) by London actress and playwright Elizabeth Inchbald (1753-1821) with two plays by American playwrights: *Slaves in Algiers* (1794) by English-born but American-adopted actress and playwright Susanna Rowson (1762-1824); and *The Female Enthusiast* (1807) by West-Indian born, Charleston-raised Sarah Pogson Smith (1774-1870). Because these three women were born and raised throughout the transatlantic Anglophone world, their views on Revolution, women, slavery, colonialism and society reflect a unique perspective on late eighteenth-century and early-nineteenth-century Anglophone social, political and cultural events. For Inchbald, the French Revolution threatened British social order as well as treatment of women in late eighteenth-century society. For Rowson, who sympathized with the American cause, women became important arbiters in the fight against slavery and in social justice, but she had to place her action outside of America, since such attitudes were not easily embraced in the New Republic. Pogson Smith's travels from the West Indies to South Carolina gave her close access to African slaves, though her play justifies the violence of women in the face of social and political repression. Since Pogson's play was written over two decades after the events themselves, it carries a more historical and less political tone than the plays written by Inchbald and Rowson, playwrights who were caught up in evolving contemporary political events.<sup>89</sup> In many ways because they were both successful actresses and playwrights, Susanna Rowson and Elizabeth Inchbald epitomize the experiences of Anglophone women in theatre. These women's words, particularly their more politically motivated plays, become important in examining how women's roles in transatlantic Anglophone theatre had changed since 1660, and how women had helped to bring about those changes.

The transatlantic Anglophone world was highly interactive and full of physical movement and intellectual, cultural, and political exchange between 1660 and 1800. Anglophone

theatre participated deeply in these movements of people and ideas. Women, along with men and children, traveled with acting companies, performed before culturally disparate audiences, and wrote plays that both reflected and challenged social, cultural, and political norms. They also challenged contemporary understandings of the roles of women in Anglophone society by placing themselves—their bodies and their ideas—in a very public position. Anglophone actresses and women playwrights before 1807 became modes of intellectual, cultural, political, and social change and exchange throughout the transatlantic world. Characters whom actresses portrayed and plays women wrote reflected contemporary social and political ideologies that were very much shaped by their environments though transatlantic interactions also influenced how various Anglophone actresses, playwrights, and audiences shared and experienced those events and beliefs. During the eighteenth century, women effectively used theatre as cultural diplomacy to influence important cultural, social, and political ideology that helped to strengthen transatlantic Anglo ideology and served a means for both Americans and Britons to further define their own national identities.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> I argue that an actress's status as a celebrity highlights differences between Britain and America where values about how women comported themselves were somewhat different. This is seen in popular actress portraiture in late-seventeenth and eighteenth-century British society, an art form and public acknowledgement of actresses that did not start in America until the 1700s with Charles Willson Peale's portrait of Nancy Hallam in costume.

<sup>2</sup> In his prologue to *The Contrast* (1787), Royall Tyler argued for the legitimacy of plays that were written by Americans and that contained American themes and characters. He showed just how contested a space theatre was in America;

EXULT, each patriot heart!—this night is shewn  
A piece, which we may fairly call our own;  
Where the proud titles of “My Lord! Your Grace!”  
To humble Mr. and plain Sir give place.  
Our Author pictures not from foreign climes  
The fashions or the follies of the times;  
But has confin'd the subject of his work  
To the gay scenes—the circles of New-York.  
On native themes his Muse displays her pow'rs;

If ours the faults, the virtues too are ours.  
 Why should our thoughts to distant countries roam,  
 When each refinement may be found at home?  
 Who travels now to ape the rich or great,  
 To deck an equipage and roll in state;  
 To court the graces, or to dance with ease,  
 Or by hypocrisy to strive to please?  
 Our free-born ancestors such arts despis'd;  
 Genuine sincerity alone they priz'd;  
 Their minds, with honest emulation fir'd;  
 To solid good—not ornament-aspir'd;  
 Or, if ambition rous'd a bolder flame,  
 Stern virtue throve, where indolence was shame.

See Royall Tyler, *The Contrast*, in *Early American Drama*, ed. Jeffrey H. Richards (New York: Penguin Books., 1997), 7-8.

<sup>3</sup> Although written after the end of our period of analysis, in 1816, Jane Scott's *The Old Oak Chest*, a humorous melodrama interspersed with music, suggests just how theatre continued to comment subtly on social restrictions and the gender divide. Scott has the robber Tinoco, cross-dressed as an old woman, expound, "O curse these petticoats! I could have maintained a running fight, till I had limbed all the rascals, but these infernal trammels will not let me move. If ever I command an army, I'll put all my soldiers in petticoats. Then they must fight." *Sisters of Gore: Gothic Melodramas by British Women*, ed. John Franceschina (New York and London: Routledge, 2000), 169.

<sup>4</sup> The decades between 1752 and 1806 are of particular interest because several colonial governments iofficially banned theatre in the 1770s. When American theatres were shut down during the Revolution, British actresses touring in America left for the Caribbean and for Britain to continue performing. After the war ended, theatre companies returned quickly to America, finding audiences eager for British culture of all kinds. See also Gilliam Russell, *The Theatres of War: Performance, Politics, and Society 1793-1815* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

<sup>5</sup> Before the American Revolution, colonists banded together as consumers to boycott British imports; they created their own products on American soil and began to produce their own art, literature and music. During the Revolution, colonists continued to strengthen their ties through continued rejection of everything British from clothing, sugar and tea to theatre, art and pottery. Once America was independent, these new "Americans" became much more aware of their British connections and attempted to change themselves even more completely to become more distinctly "American." Americans looked to change both their material dependence on British goods and their social connection with British customs and habits, including their language and literature. As Americans looked for ways to differentiate themselves from their British cousins they recognized that cultural changes were necessary and that changes in their language were within their control. As Jill LePore's *A is for American* (2002) points out, contemporaries of the American Revolution felt the creation of a new American language that was distinct from "English" was critical in the formation of a new national identity. Alphabets, for example, could be used to strengthen national ties and Noah Webster believed he could help build the American nation by codifying American spelling. Webster sought to create a new national identity through language.

T. H. Breen also sees consumption and use of British goods as a factor that led to Revolution. Creatively using newspaper advertisements, material artifacts, and contemporary commentary, Breen argues that goods become the foundation of trust among protesting colonists and that non-importation and non-consumption were brilliantly original political strategies that mobilized the populace locally while also enabling ordinary people, including women, to think in terms of a larger American community for the first time. Colonists came to believe that their independence from British goods was a source of political strength. Breen sets his interpretation against the ideological school, represented by Bernard Bailyn, whom he criticizes for neglecting material realities and politicizing processes at the expense of ideas and their

inherent tendencies. See T. H. Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>6</sup> Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution*.

<sup>7</sup> Mapping out ways to think about culture, and especially the tensions within any given culture, can be found in William Sewell's "The Concept(s) of Culture," in *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture*, eds. Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 35-61.

<sup>8</sup> Gordon Wood argues that by demolishing what remained in eighteenth century America of monarchical order (kinship, patronage, hierarchy and dependency), the American Revolution made possible the emergence of "a new society unlike any that had ever existed." Americans fundamentally changed the ways in which they related to each other and became "the most liberal, the most democratic, the most commercially minded, and the most modern people in the world." Social forces, including American consumer resistance to British imports, aided Americans in succeeding in creating a revolutionary change in society not brought on by class struggle, industrial revolution or excessive urbanization, forces that previously resulted in revolutionary changes in society. The Revolution destroyed aristocracy as it was understood in the Western World for at least two millennia. See Gordon S. Wood. *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage, 1992).

<sup>9</sup> Kenneth Silverman's *A Cultural History of the American Revolution* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, Co., 1976) connects the origin of American national culture to the Revolution. Silverman presents both high and popular culture as it helped to transform American society and recognizes the rejection of colonialism in the rejection of British culture, government, commerce and religion, especially after 1763. Silverman recognizes an increase in public interest in drama because of the presence of British military and their fondness for theatre.

<sup>10</sup> Eighteenth-century theatre, like newspapers, continued to be accessible to most socio-economic classes and provided a public forum for discussing contemporary (sometimes contentious) events. Looking at the cultural activities in which Americans participated, David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes* (1997), argues that patriotic celebrations during and after the Revolution were carefully crafted expressions of competing national visions that were loaded with partisan meanings and yet sought universal approval. Through celebrations disadvantaged persons (non-voters) could participate intimately in the political process when they were otherwise limited to other modes of democratization such as voting. Citizens of the New Republic also learned to use print culture to claim legitimacy and to delegitimize opponents. Patriotic celebrations and their reproduction in a rapidly expanding print culture helped connect local politics to a national identity. In *Revolution and the Word* (2004), Cathy Davidson also addresses print culture and its role in creating a new national identity. Davidson examines both book production and readers of early novels and sees novels as a way in which to form and codify a more unified "American" identity after the Revolution as well as to proselytize newly formed ideals set out in the Constitution.

<sup>11</sup> Richard Bushman argues that Americans imitated British counterparts in order to project a cultivated appearance. The ideal of a higher life originated in Renaissance court culture spread to the English upper middle classes in the seventeenth century and then migrated to the North American Colonies beginning around 1700. It was initially pursued primarily by the gentry. Over the eighteenth century they expressed elegance and taste in their heavily stylized manners, their refined and well-formed speech, their smooth and immaculate dress, and their erect body carriage (which toward the end of the eighteenth century shifted toward an easy posture). Shaped by gentility, social life became an unrelenting performance. After 1790, gentility spread to the middle classes, who adapted the older ideal to a more modest goal: bourgeois respectability or vernacular gentility. Formation of a consumer culture came about through collaboration between capitalism and gentility. Capitalism advanced gentility by making widely available its visible tokens in luxury goods, and gentility advanced capitalism by supplying the motivation for purchasing those goods. See Richard Bushman, *The Refinement of America* (New York: Vintage, 1992).

<sup>12</sup> Known as “the Great Awakener,” George Whitfield (1714-1770), who helped spread Puritanism throughout England and the British North American colonies, was influenced significantly by theatre, which in turn lent theatricality and drama to his religious lectures. His charismatic personality and dramatic preaching drew audiences that were affected by his delivery not unlike theatrical performances. Yet while Whitfield was interested in theatricality, ironically, he was vocally opposed to theatre in New York during the Great Awakening fervor that swept through the American colonies between 1740 and 1760. When Whitfield preached at the Presbyterian Church at the head of Wall Street, public amusements were suppressed. See Mary Henderson, *The City and the Theatre: The History of New York Playhouses: a 250 Year Journey from Bowling Green to Times Square* (New York: Back Stage Books, 2004), 22. Likewise, Peter A. Davis argues that Whitfield was instrumental in creating a receptive theatrical audience in America, reinforced by the fact that Whitfield’s popularity occurred simultaneously with the establishment and early success of theatre in colonial North America. See Peter A. Davis, *From Androboros to the First Amendment: A History of America’s First Play* (Studies Theatre History & Culture 2015). Theatre historian Theresa Saxon posits that while Whitfield may have derided theatre as a preacher, in fact “his formative years were spent reading and acting in such performances” and that “theatre taught him how to best promote his religious trade” a comment that Harry S. Stout supports significantly in the very title of his biography on George Whitfield title *The Divine Dramatist*. See Theresa Saxon, *American Theatre: History, Context, Form*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011, 91 and Harry S. Stout, *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitfield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1991). Peale’s portrait of Nancy Hallam is discussed in more detail in the chapter on the Hallam family performers, Chapter 4.

<sup>13</sup> In 1759, the House of Representatives in Pennsylvania banned shows and any mode of acting, punishment to the tune of an excessive 500 pounds. In 1762, Rhode Island refused to allow an acting company to perform in Portsmouth because plays were particularly influential “on the minds of young people and greatly endanger their morals by giving them a taste for intriguing, amusement and pleasure.” See Arthur Hornblow, *A History of the Theatre in America, Volume 1* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1919), 1, 24. Finally, for the first time as a unified act against theatre on October 20, 1774, colonial America decided that theatre was incompatible with revolution. Twelve colonies meeting as the First Continental Congress in September 1774 wrote the Articles of Association in reaction to the Intolerable Acts passed that year by Parliament in order “to obtain redress of these grievances, which threaten destruction to the lives and property of his majesty’s subjects, in North-America.” Interestingly, the eighth point in the Articles of Association encouraged “frugality, economy, and industry,” most importantly exercised and justified by the exclusion of theatre. The Continental Congress acted to “discountenance and discourage every species of extravagance and dissipation, especially all horse-racing, and all kinds of games, cock fighting, exhibitions of shews, plays, and other expensive diversions and entertainments.” The entire resolution passed under the Articles of Association concerning theatre is as follows: “8. We will, in our several stations, encourage frugality, economy, and industry, and promote agriculture, arts and the manufactures of this country, especially that of wool; and will discountenance and discourage every species of extravagance and dissipation, especially all horse-racing, and all kinds of games, cock fighting, exhibitions of shews, plays, and other expensive diversions and entertainments; and on the death of any relation or friend, none of us, or any of our families will go into any further mourning-dress, than a black crepe or ribbon on the arm or hat, for gentlemen, and a black ribbon and necklace for ladies, and we will discontinue the giving of gloves and scarves at funerals.” See Worthington Chauncy Ford, ed., “Thursday October 20, 1774” *Journals of the Continental Congress: 1774-1789, Volume I. 1774*, 34 vols., (Washington D.C., Library of Congress Government Printing Office, 1904), 76, 78. For the full Articles of Association document, see also [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/contcong\\_10-20-74.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/contcong_10-20-74.asp) See Don B. Wilmet, et. al., *The Cambridge History of American Theatre: 1870-1945, Volume 2* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK, 1998), 5. The ban on theatre was not lifted until 1789, though British military personnel continued to present theatrical performances throughout the American Revolution.

Curiously, the rationale to ban theatre in 1774 appears to be economic rather than moral. While colonial America attempted to gain economic independence from Great Britain, lawmakers evaluated theatre on its economic basis as harmful to the unity of the Association as a whole. The British military,

displaced players themselves, continued to walk the boards entertaining audiences both pro- and anti-British during the American Revolution, often employing local talent, especially young women with whom some of the British officers formed attachments, in their performances.

In *Becoming America*, Jon Butler asserts that America displayed a religious pluralism not found anywhere in Europe and that Revolution provided American society with a distinctly new religion, economy, politics and secular life. In addition, Butler shows that colonies prior to Revolution were already developing a cultural revolution with their own distinctive ways of spending, entertaining, building, worshipping, decorating and engaging in politics that preceded (and perhaps even propagated) the actual American Revolution. This sense of establishing a nationalistic sense of society and social norms in America can be seen in David Waldstreicher's arguments about how Americans celebrated their idea of "self." Waldstreicher argues that "nationalism" is a "set of practices that empowered Americans to fight over the legacy of their national Revolution, and to protest their exclusion from that Revolution's fruits." He concedes that the idea of nationalism is more easily recognized than defined and that no good has come of attempts by consensus historians to describe a "national mind," a single mystical "memory" to which all must subscribe to be accounted truly national. For Waldstreicher, American nationalism is real, but it is not an explicit quality of which one is either possessed or deficient. He sees social historians as focused too much on local public displays (parades in particular), leaving nationalism "comprehensible only as an abstraction." Post-revolution Americans were far from united in their understandings of their place in "the nation." Local, regional, and national identities existed simultaneously, always in competition with each other. Waldstreicher argues that patriotic celebrations during the Revolution, and especially afterwards, were carefully crafted expressions of competing national visions (national festivals and holidays marking Geo. Washington's birthday, Jefferson's 1800 triumph, opening shots of Lexington, Palmetto day in Charleston, Fourth of July); these were loaded with partisan meanings that sought, always vainly, universal approval. Yet, this "relentless politicization" of nationalist rituals constructed a nationalist ideology of unity, all the more potent for its elusiveness. The spread of nationalism was through local newspapers (faithfully reprinting patriotic accounts of patriotic celebrations). Waldstreicher also argues that Federalists, then Republicans, learned to use print culture both as a means to claim legitimacy and as a weapon to delegitimize their opponents. The nation's growing regionalism, shaped by party politics, was nevertheless nationalist in context; regionalism "as often as not actually contributed to nationalism, even if how it did so ultimately weakened the federal union." See David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism 1776-1820*. (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

<sup>14</sup> Silverman, for example, recognizes the rejection of colonialism in the rejection of British culture, government, commerce and religion, especially after 1763. Silverman, *A Cultural History of the American Revolution*.

<sup>15</sup> Silverman, *A Cultural History of the American Revolution*.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>17</sup> See Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution* for a more complete analysis of the consumer revolution that took place in America during the last half of the eighteenth century.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, xv.

<sup>19</sup> During the Revolution American women gained political power by materially participating in the production and distribution of "American" goods. They spun and wove. They purchased American consumer goods. They attended theatre and particularly after the Revolution, performed as actresses and wrote plays. Women encouraged the consumption of American-made products and services and boycotted British imports. Following the Revolution Federalists invoked women as symbols of respectability. As such, the everyday "performances" of women demanded that they present symbolically respectable, "Republican" manners. Post-Revolutionary women, in particular, now accustomed to participating in more public life, actively engaged with flag ceremonies and parades, public debates and theatre.

<sup>20</sup> See Peter Burke, *Varieties of Cultural History* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997), 183-212. This chapter, "Unity and Variety in Cultural History," describes different historians' approaches to cultural

encounters and is a good starting point for thinking about the different ways of describing cross-cultural encounters.

<sup>21</sup> See Laura Engel, *Fashioning Celebrity: Eighteenth-Century British Actresses and Strategies for Image Making* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2011), 1-2.

<sup>22</sup> According to Engel, “The public’s wish to see female celebrities as both authentic (as “real” women) and theatrical (as seductive stars) maintained an almost impossible standard for female fame. Celebrity culture celebrated actresses’ power at the same time that it exposed actresses’ vulnerability by positing models of female normality, value, and virtue that female performers could never truly adopt. Thus, the ironic nature of female celebrity in the late eighteenth century was inextricably linked to the production and reproduction of cultural illusions about femininity, ideas that are still operating in the twenty-first century.” See Engel, *Fashioning Celebrity*, 2. This joins a number of excellent studies which examine the roles of women in theatre, including Kristina Staub, *Sexual Suspects: Eighteenth-Century Players and Sexual Ideology* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994); Elizabeth Howe, *The First English Actresses: Women and Drama, 1660-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), and Sandra Richards, *The Rise of the English Actress* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993).

<sup>23</sup> For further commentary on the role of theatre in crafting celebrity in British society see Wanko, *Roles of Authority*. See also Mary Luckhurst and Jane Moody, eds., *Theatre and Celebrity in Britain, 1660-2000* (New York: Palgrave, 2005). This collection of essays examines the phenomenon of celebrity within theatre and the myriad ways in which actors defined and navigated their own understanding of fame.

<sup>24</sup> For further discussion of the importance of letter writing in the Age of Enlightenment, see Dena Goodman’s study *Becoming a Woman in the Age of Letters*. Goodman examines material and consumer culture associated with writing in France and explores the idea that women experienced writing as an activity of self-reflection and connection that would seem to have been important to eighteenth-century Anglophone actresses as they traveled from place to place leaving family members behind in their pursuit of fame, fortune, or merely a simple wage-earning existence. While her study focuses on France and French women, Goodman’s work serves as a template for the type of public engagement in which contemporary women were participating and how society judged their social interactions. Goodman argues that during the eighteenth-century, French male writers worked to bring written French closer to spoken French but as they did so they began to deprecate women’s speech and writing. See Dena Goodman. “Women and the Enlightenment.” In *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, edited by Renate Bridenthal, Susan Mosher Stuard, and Merry Wiesner, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998), 233-264. See also Dena Goodman, “L’Ortografie des Dames: Gender and Language in the Old Regime” in *Women, Gender and Enlightenment*, eds. Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 195-223.

<sup>25</sup> See Engel, *Fashioning Celebrity*;, 3.

<sup>26</sup> See Catherine Burrough, *Women in British Romantic Theatre: Drama, Performance, and Society, 1790-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Engel, *Fashioning Celebrity*; Lerner, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness*. Wanko, *Roles of Authority*.

<sup>27</sup> Wanko, *Roles of Authority*.

<sup>28</sup> Staub, *Sexual Suspects*.

<sup>29</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

<sup>30</sup> Donald D. Hall, “Feminist Analysis,” *Literary and Cultural Theory*. (Boston: Houghton, 2001), 199-213.

<sup>31</sup> Wharman, whose work presents an argument for “the rise of modern individualism” (xvi) discusses how and why cross-dressing may have been more socially acceptable from 1700 to 1780 than in the half century after 1780 when images of republican motherhood and feminine maternal identity become increasingly popular. See Dror Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004). 7-11.

<sup>32</sup> Both Dror Wahrman's work and Jean-Christophe Agnew's are helpful for thinking about the theatricality of Western culture in the eighteenth century (and the emerging emphasis on authenticity by late eighteenth and early nineteenth century). See Wahrman, *Making of the Modern Self*, and Jean-Christophe Agnew, *Worlds Apart: The Market and the Theater in Anglo-American Thought, 1550-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). Wahrman, especially, is also helpful for thinking about the changing reception of cross-dressing (see his chapter on gender).

<sup>33</sup> Cross-dressing roles allowed heroines agency not known to women before this period and Aphra Behn took great advantage to present women both as objects onstage as they showed off their pretty figures and as arbiters of their own actions. Jacqueline Pearson discusses Behn's use of gender in her article, "Gender and Narrative in the Fiction of Aphra Behn" (*The Review of English Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 165, Feb. 1991, 40-56) and Stephen Szilagyi discusses sexual politics that reflect Restoration politics within Behn's work in "The Sexual Politics of Behn's *The Rover: After Patriarchy*" (*Studies in Philology*, Vol. 95, No. 4, Autumn 1998, 435-455). Behn's subversion of gender roles is further discussed in Roberta C. Martin's work, "Beauteous Wonder of a Different Kind": Aphra Behn's Destabilization of Gender Categories" (*College English*, Vol. 61, No. 2, Nov., 1998, 192-210). A more thorough overview of gender roles in Restoration England is presented in Laura Runge's work, *Gender and Language in British Literary Criticism, 1660-1790* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

<sup>34</sup> Around 1640, Anglophone women writers gained greater access to print in Britain as censorship broke down, allowing for a variety of voices to be heard. Social, cultural and political events during the English Civil War and Counter Reformation elicited women's published responses. While much of what they wrote was religious, simply publishing their words encouraged other women to seek publication in different venues. See Elaine Hobby, *Virtue of Necessity: English Women's Writing, 1649-1688* (London: Vertigo Press, 1988). See also Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness: From the Middle Ages to Eighteen-Seventy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>35</sup> For further analysis of the commodification of women as stage bodies, see Will Pritchard, *Outward Appearances: The Female Exterior in Restoration London* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 2008); Kathy Newman, *Fashioning Femininity and English Renaissance Drama* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Alice Clark, *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century* (London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd., 1919); Michelene Wandor, *Carry on Understudies: Theatre and Sexual Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, *Writing Women in Jacobean England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Paul Salzman, *Early Modern Women's Writing: An Anthology 1560-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Elizabeth Howe, "A State of Undress. The first British actresses on stage: 1660-1700," in Elizabeth Woodrugh, *Women in European Theatre* (London: Intellect Books, 1995).

<sup>36</sup> Newman, *Fashioning Femininity*, xvii.

<sup>37</sup> Newman, *Fashioning Femininity*. See also Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self: (i-11)*. Wahrman makes an intriguing argument and discusses the idea of the importance of the Amazon in rendering (and feminizing, thus controlling) colonial spaces.

<sup>38</sup> During this period of theatre commercialization, most theatre managers were actors-managers, a pairing that expanded transatlantically. The idea of actors managing theatres made sense in many ways. They were familiar with the demands of performances, they knew the players well, they understood audience expectations and were part of the production both on stage and off. However, maintaining respect from fellow performers required a careful balance and often theatre managers found themselves in conflict with other performers. For studies on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century theatre managers. See Darryll Grantley, *Historical Dictionary of British Theatre: Early Period* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2013); Susan Crabtree and Peter Beudert, *Scenic Art for the Theatre: History, Tools and Techniques* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2005); Deborah Payne Fisk, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to English Restoration Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Laura Engel, *Fashioning Celebrity*. Some women, like cross-dressing actress and stage manager Charlotte Charke seemed to fall naturally within the genderless bounds in the role as theatre management. Her desire for sensationalism aside, Charke

successfully managed the Haymarket Theatre even as she became a spectacle herself wearing breeches both on stage and off. See Kathryn Shevlow, *Charlotte: being a True Account of an Actress's Flamboyant Adventures in Eighteenth-Century London's Wild and Wicked Theatrical World* (New York: Macmillan/Picador Press, 2006).

<sup>39</sup> The names of individual performers rarely appeared before the seventeenth century and were occasionally omitted even into the eighteenth century. For example, scholars often identify the first woman to appear on the English stage after Charles II legalized women performing publicly as Margaret Hughes/Hewes, Mrs. Coleman or Ann Marshall. Likewise, the name of Lewis Hallam's wife, sometimes identified as Sarah (though Lewis Hallam, Jr. marries a Sarah Perry and the daughter who travels to America with the London Company of Comedians is identified as either Sarah or Helen, perhaps adding to the confusion since daughters were often named after their mothers) is also unconfirmed by historical records. The commercialization of theatre likewise occurred during a time when English society became more open to engaging with European culture, namely French and Italian ballet and opera. In addition to naming players and playwrights and associating players with particular roles, the very nature of theatre began to change with the inclusion of stage decorations and technological gadgetry previously unknown on relatively bare pre-Restoration stages. Now that England was open to European cultural influences, the nature of theatre began to change. In particular, what stages looked like began to transform with elaborate stagings replacing bare, minimalistic stages and productions. These changes in stage production were likely influenced by European performances, namely Italian theatre and opera. See Darryll Grantley, *Historical Dictionary of British Theatre: Early Period* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2013), 10-11.

<sup>40</sup> See Nancy Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); Elaine Hobby, *Virtue of Necessity: English Women's Writing, 1649-1688* (London: Vertigo Press, 1988); Lerner, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness*; Cheryl Turner, *Living by the Pen: Women Writers in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge Press, 1992); Cynthia Lowenthal, *Performing Identities on the Restoration Stage* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2003); Janet Todd, *The Secret Life of Aphra Behn* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997); Angeline Goreau, *Reconstructing Aphra: A Social Biography of Aphra Behn* (New York: Dial Press, 1980); Dawn Lewcock, *Aphra Behn Studies: More for Seeing than Hearing: Behn and the Use of Theatre*. Ed. Janet Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>41</sup> Michelene Wandor, "Political Dynamics: The Feminisms," *Modern Theories of Drama*, 265.

<sup>42</sup> See Donald E. Hall, "Feminist Analysis," *Literary and Cultural Theory* (Boston: Houghton, 2001), 208.

<sup>43</sup> See Walter J. Meserve, *An Emerging Entertainment: The Drama of the American People to 1828* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977); Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1980); Arthur Hobson Quinn, *A History of the American Drama from the Beginning to the Civil War* (New York: Harper, 1923); Thomas Clark Pollock, *The Philadelphia Theatre in the Eighteenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1933); George O. Seilhamer, *History of the American Theatre*, (Philadelphia: Globe, 1891); Jack Vaughn, *Early American Dramatists: From the Beginnings to 1900* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1981); Richard Moody, *America Takes the Stage*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955); George C. D. Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1927); Schoefeld and Macheski, eds., *Curtain Calls*.

<sup>44</sup> See Arthur Hobson Quinn, *A History of the American Drama from the Beginning to the Civil War*; Garff B. Wilson's *Three Hundred Years of American Drama and Theatre* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1981); and Hugh F. Rankin's *The Theatre in Colonial America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965). See also Lisa A. Freeman, *Character's Theater: Genre and Identity on the Eighteenth-Century English Stage* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002); George Oberkirsh Seilhamer, *History of the American Theatre before the Revolution 1749-1774*, (Philadelphia: Globe Printing House, 1888); Philip H. Highfill et. Al., *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers and Other Stage Personnel in London, 1660-1800*, Volume 4 (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1975); Thomas Allston Brown, *The New York Stage from the First Performance in 1732 to 1900* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1903); Joseph N. Ireland, *Records of the New York Stage*

from 1750 to 1860, Vol. I (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1966); Richardson Wright, *Revels in Jamaica, 1682-1838*. (Dodd, Mead & Company: New York, 1937); William Dunlap, *A History of the American Theatre from Its Origins to 1832* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005).

<sup>45</sup> See Odai Johnson, *Absence and Memory in Colonial American Theatre: Fiorelli's Plaster* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>46</sup> Douglas S. Harvey, *Theatre and Empire: A History of Assumptions in the English-Speaking Atlantic World, 1700-1860* (Ann Arbor, MI: Proquest), 1.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, 9-10.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, 1.

<sup>49</sup> Kathleen Wilson, "The Good, the Bad, and the Impotent: Imperialism and the Politics of Identity in Georgian England," in Ann Bermingham and John Brewer, eds., *The Consumption of Culture, 1600-1800: Image, Object, Text* (London: Routledge, 1995), 238. Other relevant studies by include Kathleen Wilson, *A Sense of the People: Politics, Culture, and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2003), Kathleen Wilson, ed., *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and the Empire, 1660-1840*(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

<sup>50</sup> See Meredith Bartron, "The Tenter-Hooks of Temptation": The Debate Over Theatre in Post-Revolutionary America," *The Gettysburg Historical Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 1, Art. 8, 2003, 75-108.

<sup>51</sup> Wilson, *A Sense of the People*; Walter J. Meserve, *An Emerging Entertainment: The Drama of the American People to 1828* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1977); Harvey, *Theatre and Empire*; Darryll Grantley, *Historical Dictionary of British Theatre: Early Period* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2013); John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

<sup>52</sup> Wilson, *A Sense of the People*; Wilson, ed., *A New Imperial History*, Harvey, *Theatre and Empire*; Walter J. Meserve, *An Emerging Entertainment: The Drama of the American People to 1828* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977); Richard Moody, *America Takes the Stage*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955); Cheryl Turner, *Living by the Pen: Women Writers in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge Press, 1992); Lerner, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness*.

<sup>53</sup> Gossip seems inevitable. Placed on a platform to be ogled, actresses were judged by their physical appearance and had been since they were first onstage in the 1660s in London. Yet, while these first actresses were part of the new "shock and awe" factor of early Restoration theatre that drew audiences and introduced court-approved heterosexual licentious interactions on the English stage, not all actresses were judged by their physical beauty alone, but rather were judged by their locution skills and abilities to hold an audience's attention. By 1795, London theatre critic, Joseph Haslewood often described an actress's physical and moral qualities. For example, he said of Frances Abington, "Fashion seems to have elevated this lady beyond her actual merit...Vain insufferably of a person never elegant, and a face vulgarly featured" while he described Dorothea Jordan as "respected and caressed by many persons of the first rank and character, who are pleased with her conversation...She has no improper pride, nor is she like some of her contemporaries, fond of appearing a little something among the great. The brightest part of her character is, that she is kind to her relations, and generous to the needy.—And *Humanity*, says the Moralist, is not only an indication of a feeling heart, but the strongest criterion of virtue." Joseph Haslewood, *The Secret history of the green room: containing authentic and entertaining memoirs of the actors and actresses in the three Theatres Royal...* (London: Printed for J. Owen, 1795) reprinted by Eighteenth Century Collections Online (Brenigsville, PA, 2011), 55, 83. See also Faye E. Dudden, *Women in the American Theatre: Actresses & Audiences 1790-1870* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994).

<sup>54</sup> While commercial and professional theatre in America likely began with the arrival of the London Company of Comedians in 1752, for the sake of Dudden's argument it seems appropriate, if not entirely

accurate, to locate professional theatre in America in 1790. Philadelphia, as the nation's new temporary capital became an important theatre center at that moment and Thomas Wignell (cousin of Lewis Hallam), left to form his own company along with musician Alexander Reinagel, opening the Chestnut Street Theatre and recruiting over a dozen British and Irish actors, including Susanna Rowson. Wignell was clearly invested in theatre as a commercial investment and worked in the company as both actor and manager and his theatre was a success. On 22 May 1790, Thomas Wignell sent a letter to President George Washington, "Mr. Wignell, with the utmost respect and deference, has the Honor of transmitting to the President of the United States, two copies of the Contrast"; along Royall Tyler's play, *The Contrast, a Comedy; in Five Acts: Written by a Citizen of the United States; Performed with Applause at the Theatres in New-York, Philadelphia, and Maryland; and Published (under an Assignment of the Copy-Right) by Thomas Wignell* (Philadelphia, 1790). Tyler's work is considered to be the first play written by an American to be performed in America in 1787. In fact, Wignell gave a reading of *The Contrast* on in the City Tavern in Philadelphia on 10 December 1787. Set in New York, Tyler's comedy features "American" characters, one of whom, Manly, actually mentions Washington: "I have humbly imitated our illustrious WASHINGTON, in having exposed my health and life in the service of my country, without reaping any other reward than the glory of conquering in so arduous a contest." Yet Tyler's characterization of Yankee Jonathan, who attends a playhouse and thinks it's a hocus pocus performance, suggests that he is a clown rather than an enlightened American. It can be argued, however, that Yankee Jonathan shows the conflicted nature of American audiences who might oppose theatre on moral or religious grounds but who nonetheless, take part in and enjoy the performance. Meredith Bartron argues that Jonathan might be "simple and honest, but he does not have a mind of his own." Further, she claims, "Republicanism meant freemen should have the right to choose their own entertainment, yet it also meant freemen had the right to be protected from dangerous elements of society." See Bartron, "The Tenter-Hooks of Temptation": The Debate Over Theatre in Post-Revolutionary America," *The Gettysburg Historical Journal*, Volume 2, Issue 1, Article 8, 2003, 75-108. See also <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-05-02-0261> accessed 25 February 2015. According to John Durang, an actor and contemporary of Thomas Wignell, "When Gen'l Washington visited the theatre, the east stage box was decorated with the United States coat of arms over the box. Mr. Wignell, dress'd in black and powdered, with two silver candlesticks would wait at the box door to receive him and light him to his seat." Alan S. Downer, ed., *The Memoir of John Durang: American Actor, 1785-1816* (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 1966), 27. See also Arthur Hobson Quinn, *Representative American Plays*, (New York: The Century Co., 1917), 58; Thomas Clark Pollock, *The Philadelphia Theatre in the Eighteenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1933), 141. See Faye E. Dudden, *Women in the American Theatre: Actresses & Audiences 1790-1870* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994).

<sup>55</sup> Schoefeld and Macheski, eds., *Curtain Calls*, Prologue, xix.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, xvi.

<sup>57</sup> William Hazlitt, "Mrs. Siddons," *The Examiner* 15 June 1816 as quoted in Pat Rogers, "Towering Beyond Her Sex": Stature and Sublimity in the Achievement of Sarah Siddons," in Schoefeld and Macheski, eds., *Curtain Calls*; 48.

<sup>58</sup> Pat Rogers, "Towering Beyond Her Sex": Stature and Sublimity in the Achievement of Sarah Siddons," in *Curtain Calls: British and American Women and the Theater*, Mary Anne Schoefeld and Cecelia Macheski, eds., (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1991), 49.

<sup>59</sup> For more discussion on the reasons women chose acting as a profession, see Rosamund Gilder, *Enter the Actress: The First Women in Theatre* (London: George G. Harrap and Co., 1931); John Harold Wilson, *All the King's Ladies: Actresses of the Restoration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958); Allardyce Nicoll, *The History of Restoration Drama 1660-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928); Elizabeth Howe, *The First English Actresses: Women and Drama 1660-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Mary Luckhurst and Jane Moody eds., *Theatre Celebrity in Britain, 1660-2000* (New York: Palgrave, 2005); Cynthia Lowenthal, *Performing Identities on the Restoration Stage* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2003); Laura Engel, *Fashioning Celebrity*; Elizabeth Howe, "A State of Undress. The first British actresses on stage: 1660-1700," in Elizabeth Woodrugh,

*Women in European Theatre* (London: Intellect Books, 1995); Kathy Newman, *Fashioning Femininity and English Renaissance Drama* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Sandra Richards, *The Rise of the English Actress* (Boston: St. Martin's Press, 1993). For comments on women as playwrights see Elaine Hobby, *Virtue of Necessity: English Women's Writing, 1649-1688* (London: Vertigo Press, 1988); Lerner, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness*; Cheryl Turner, *Living by the Pen: Women Writers in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge Press, 1992).

<sup>60</sup> For general scholarship on Mercy Otis Warren see Elaine Showalter, *Sister's Choice: Tradition and Change in American Women's Writing*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Laura Brown, *Ends of Empire: Women and Ideology in Early Eighteenth-Century English Literature*. (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993); Schoefeld and Macheski, eds., *Curtain Calls* Katherine Anthony, *First Lady of the Revolution: The Life of Mercy Otis Warren* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1958); Jean Fritz, *Cast for a Revolution: Some American Females and Enemies, 1728-1814* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1972); Mercy Otis Warren, *The Plays and Poems of Mercy Otis Warren*, ed. Benjamin Franklin V (Delmar, NY: Scholars Fascimilies and Reprints, 1980).

<sup>61</sup> Hallam's Company of Comedians was a family company that included eight men, four of their wives and three children: Mr. and Mrs. Clarkson, Mr. and Mrs. Adcock, Mr. and Mrs. Rigby, poet and musician John Singleton, Patrick Malone, Mr. Herbert, Mr. Wynell, Mrs. Hallam, who was the company's leading lady; Lewis Hallam, Sr. known as a "low comedian;" and three of the Hallam's children: twelve-year-old Lewis Jr., ten-year-old Adam and eight-year-old Sarah (or Helen) See Joseph Norton Ireland, *Records of the New York Stage: from 1750 to 1860, Volume 1* (New York: T. H. Morrell, 1866), 17.

<sup>62</sup> Tracy C. Davis and Ellen Donkin, eds, *Women and Playwriting in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Showalter, *Sister's Choice*; Laura Brown, *Ends of Empire: Women and Ideology in Early Eighteenth-Century English Literature*. (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993); Schoefeld and Macheski, eds., *Curtain Calls* Cheryl Turner, *Living by the Pen: Women Writers in the Eighteenth Century*. (New York: Routledge, 1992); Barbara Caine, *English Feminism, 1780-1980*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Nancy F. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); Judith Fetterly, *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983). For general scholarship on Hannah Cowley see Angela Escott, *The Celebrated Hannah Cowley: Experiments in Dramatic Genre, 1776-1794* (London: Pickering and Chatto Publishers, 2011); Misty G. Anderson, *Female Playwrights and Eighteenth-Century Comedy: negotiating Marriage on the London Stage* (New York: Palgrave, 2002); Betsy Bolton, *Women, Nationalism, and the Romantic Stage: Theatre and Politics in Britain, 1780-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Ellen Donkin, *Getting into the Act: Women Playwrights in London, 1776-1829* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Judith Phillips Stanton, "As This New-Found Path Attempting: Women Dramatists in England, 1660-1800." In *Curtain Calls: British and American Women and the Theatre, 1660-1820*, Mary Anne Schofield and Cecelia Macheski, eds.; Lisa Freeman, *Character's Theatre: Genre and Identity on the Eighteenth-Century English Stage* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013). For general scholarship on Elizabeth Inchbald see James Boaden, *Memoirs of Mrs Inchbald, including her familiar correspondence; to which are added the Massacre and A case of conscience now first published. 2 Vols 1833* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Ellen Donkin, *Getting into the Act: Women Playwrights in London, 1776-1829* (New York: Routledge, 1995). The scope and analysis and the sheer depth of research undertaken by Annibel Jenkins in her biography of Inchbald is impressive and may stand as the authoritative text on the actress, playwright and critic for some time. See Annibel Jenkins, *I'll Tell You What: The Life of Elizabeth Inchbald* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2015).

<sup>63</sup> The Theatre Licensing Act was modified in Britain in 1843 and was not repealed altogether until Parliament passed the Theatres Act of 1968. The Act, while never overtly practiced in America, affected the performances British players gave when they performed in America since their training was only in "acceptable" plays. See Richard Dutton, *Mastering the Revels: The Regulation and Censorship of English renaissance Drama* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991) and Calhoun Winton, *John Gay and the London Theatre* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1993).

<sup>64</sup> Schoefeld and Macheski, eds., *Curtain Calls*; Amelia Howe Kritzer, *Plays by Early American Women, 1775-1850* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1995); Dorothy Weil, *In Defense of Women: Susanna Haswell Rowson (1762-1824)* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976); Ellen B. Brandt, *Susanna Haswell Rowson: America's First Best-Selling Novelist* (Chicago: Serba Press, 1975); Vena Bernadette Field, *Constantia: A Study of the Life and Works of Judith Sargent Murray, 1751-1820* (Orono: University of Maine, 1931); Janet James, *Changing Ideas about Women in the United States, 1776-1825* (New York: Garland, 1981); Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill, 1980); Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Woman, 1750-1800* (Boston, 1980); and Joan Hoff Wilson and Sharon L. Billinger, "Mercy Otis Warren: Playwright, Poet, and Historian of the American Revolution," in *Female Scholars: A Tradition of Learned Women Before 1800*, ed. J. R. Brink (Montreal: Eden Press Women's Publications, 1980), 161-82.; Lester H. Cohen, "Explaining the Revolution: Ideology and Ethics in Mercy Otis Warren's Historical Theory," *William and Mary Quarterly* 37 (1980): 200-218; Maud Macdonald Hutcheson, "Mercy Warren, 1728-1814," *William and Mary Quarterly* 10 (1953): 378-402; Lawrence J. Friedman, *Inventors of the Promised Land* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975); Lawrence J. Friedman and Arthur H. Shaffer, "Mercy Otis Warren and the Politics of Historical Nationalism," *New England Quarterly* 48 (1975): 194-215; Arthur H. Shaffer, *The Politics of History: Writing the History of the American Revolution* (Chicago: Precedent Publishing, 1975).

<sup>65</sup> Jennifer Hall-Witt, *Fashionable Acts: Opera and Elite Culture in London, 1780-1880* (Durham, NH: University of New Hampshire Press, 2007). Analysis of audience behavior and performer interactions in the 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> Centuries in Britain and America see James J. Lynch, *Box, Pit and Gallery: Stage and Society in Johnson's London* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1953); Robert C. Allen, *Horrible Prettiness: Burlesque and American Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

<sup>66</sup> Hall-Witt, *Fashionable Acts*: 3.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, 4-5.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, 24-32.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, 24-32.

<sup>70</sup> See Dudden, *Women in the American Theatre*.

<sup>71</sup> See Dudden, *Women in the American Theatre*; Davis, *Actresses as Working Women*: Tracy C. Davis and Ellen Donkin, eds., *Women and Playwriting in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>72</sup> The Revolutionary Era is loosely defined for the purposes of this work as the period between 1763-1799, covering the two significant revolutions of the period that influenced Anglophone culture and society in the transatlantic world, the American Revolution and the French Revolution.

<sup>73</sup> More specifically, I examine four plays by Aphra Behn: *The City Heiress* (1682), *The Roundheads* (1681), *The Rover, Part I* (1677), *The Feigned Courtesans* (1679) and one novel, *Oroonoko* (1688) that was transformed into a play by Thomas Southerne in 1695; seven plays by Susanna Centlivre: *The Purjured Husband* (1700), *The Platonick Lady* (1706), *The Busie Body* (1709), *A Bold Stroke for a Wife* (1718), *The Wonder!: A Woman Keeps a Secret* (1714), *A Wife Well Managed* (1715), and *The Gamester* (1705); five plays by Mercy Otis Warren: *The Adulateur* (1772), *The Defeat* (1773), *The Group* (1775), *The Blockheads* (1776) and *The Motley Assembly* (1779); six plays by Hannah Cowley: *The Runaway* (1776), *The Belle's Strategem* (1780), *A Bold Stroke for a Husband* (1783), *More Ways Than One* (1784), *Which is the Man?* (1782), and *Who's the Dupe?* (1779); three plays by Susanna Rowson: *Slaves in Algiers; or A Struggle for Freedom* (1794), *The Volunteers* (1795), and *The Female Patriot* (1795), and one novel, *Charlotte Temple, A Tale of Truth* (1791) that introduces a post-revolutionary transatlantic love affair between a British officer and a pregnant woman whom he abandons; five plays by Elizabeth Inchbald: *Everyone Has His Fault* (1793), *I'll Tell You What* (1785), *The Mogul Tale; or, The Descent of the Balloon* (1784), *Lovers' Vows* (1798) and *The Massacre* (1792); one play by Sarah Pogsom Smith: *The Female Enthusiast* (1807); and one play by Mary Carr Clarke *The Fair Americans* (1815).

<sup>74</sup> When the American Revolution ended in 1783, people were conflicted about what “revolution” meant. Thomas Paine and James Madison agreed that a great “revolution” had occurred. In *The American Crisis*, No. 13 (1783), Paine wrote, “The times that tried men’s souls are over-and the greatest and completest [sic] revolution the world ever knew, gloriously and happily accomplished.” Likewise, Madison wrote in Federalist Paper No. 14 (1787), “Happily for America, happily, we trust, for the whole human race, they pursued a new and more noble course. They accomplished a revolution which has no parallel in the annals of human society.” Yet for Benjamin Rush, “revolution” and war were two different experiences. Rush believed that “revolution” began when the American war ended; “The American war is over; but this is far from being the case with the American Revolution. On the contrary, nothing but the first act of the drama is closed. It remains yet to establish and perfect our new forms of government, and to prepare the principles, morals, and manners of our citizens for these forms of government after they are established and brought to perfection.”—Benjamin Rush, May 25, 1786. The language Rush employs in describing Revolution makes a direct connection to theatre and the theatrical nature of human interactions. War, according to Rush, allowed for change in America, but “revolution” would be the next step in this transformation of the British colonies into “America,” and would involve both the establishment of a new form of government and the preparation of American citizens (their principles, morals and manners) in order for this new government to succeed. Revolution, therefore, was not a simple action accomplished during the eight years of war with Britain, but was a direct result of that war and a process that Rush imagined was both transformative and new. While Madison and Paine saw Revolution and War as equal, Rush argued they were separate, more cause and effect. Thus even those men who lived through this war could not definitively agree upon whether to call it the American “war” or the American “revolution.” According to Rush, the American Revolution was merely a first step in dismantling the imperial structures created during the early modern era.

Certainly, while Rush’s suggestion that the American “revolution” was just beginning following the American war provides insight into contemporary attitudes about revolution and change, it is important to recognize (according to scholars) *when* “revolution” occurred, *for whom* this “revolution” occurred, and whether it permanently changed the tone of American society. The debate still continues as to whether the American Revolution radically transformed colonial society, or merely replaced one form of government (at a distance) with another (local). While some scholars might argue that the revolution should be defined by the war itself (1775-1783) and not by its political aftermath, other scholars see social, political and economic shifts occurring as early as the seventeenth century or as late as the nineteenth century. Revolutions have taken place throughout human history and vary according to method, duration and motivating ideology, though their results consistently include major changes in culture, economy, and socio-political institutions. Theatre of this period helps reflect contemporary attitudes about society and suggests important cultural that occurred in transatlantic Anglophone society, most importantly the public presence of women onstage, the private lives of women as followed by society and the vocalization of women’s manners of understanding their changing world as playwrights and as performers.

<sup>75</sup> Pepys’s nickname for the actress Katherine Corey (nee Mitchell, fl. 1660-1692) was “Dol Common” after a prostitute she played in Ben Johnson’s consistently popular comedy, *The Alchemest* (1610). Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, Entry, Friday, 15 January 1668/69, as accessed in <http://www.pepysdiary.com/archive/1667/08/17/> on 20 September 2012. This particular role was controversial and personal. Nell Gwyn was having a private quarrel with Lady Elizabeth Harvey, the woman Pepys mentions in his journal, and whom Gwyn called a “hermaphrodite” claiming to shun her lesbian advances. Gwyn convinced Corey to mimic Harvey in her role as Sempronia causing a large public scandal. Ironically, Lady Harvey and Nell Gwyn eventually became friends and the scandal was all but forgotten. See Howe, *The First English Actresses: Women and Drama, 1660-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) and John Spurr, *England in the 1670s: This Masquerading Age* (London: Blackwell, 2000), 133-114.

<sup>76</sup> More of letter reads: (I fear Mr. Short will not have a very favourable opinion of England. Unfortunately Col. Smith set off, upon a tour a few days after his arrival, and Mr. Short having but few acquaintance will not find himself highly gratified; we have accompanied him once to the Theater, but after having been accustomed to those of France, one can have little realish for the cold, heavy action, and uncouth appearance of the English stage. This would be considerd as treason of a very black dye, but I speak as an

American. I know not how a Siddons may reconcile me to English action, but as yet I have seen nothing that equals Parisian ease, and grace. I should like to visit France once a year during my residence in Europe. The English papers ascribe the late disturbances in the provinces of France, to the example set by the Rebellious Americans, as well as every failure of their own Merchants and Manufact[urer]s to the *Ruinous* American trade, tho perhaps two thirds of them never had any intercourse with America. O! for the energy of an absolute government, aya and for the power too. How many Letters de cachet have these abusive Beings deserved." <http://www.masshist.org/publications/apde/portia.php?id=AFC06d088> accessed 10 April 2013.

<sup>77</sup> I depend much upon the cherefull Social converse during the long winter evening which are now fast approaching, many of which we have already spent quite alone wishing for a Friend to enliven the Scene. You know we are not those kind of people who delight in Gambling and Routes and go seldom to the Theater. I was last Evening however at Drury Lane and Saw for the first time Mrs. Siddons.

Grace was in all her steps heaven in her Eye

And every Gesture dignity and Love.

She appeared in the tragedy of Othello, and acted the part of Desdemona. Othello was represented blacker than any affrican. Whether it arises from the prejudices of Education or from a real natural antipathy I cannot determine, but my whole soul shuderd when ever I saw the sooty ~~heretik?~~ More touch the fair Desdemona. I wonder not that Brabantio thought Othello must have used Spells and magick to have won her affections. ~~<The Character of Othello>~~ Through the whole play ~~<is that of a Noble Generous open Manly>~~ the Character of Othello is Manly open generous and noble, betrayed by a most artfull villan and a combination of circumstances into an action that his Soul abhorred. ~~<but I So powerfull was prejudice that I could not seperate the coulour from the Man and by which means>~~

That most incomparable Speach of Othellos lost half its force and Beauty, because I could not Sperate the coulour from the Man. Yet it was admirably well spoken.

O now, for ever

Fare well the tranquil Mind! fare well content  
Fare well the plumed troop, and the big warss  
That make ambition virtue! O fare well  
Fare well the Neighing steed, and the shrill trump,  
The spirit stiring Drum, the ear piercing fife  
The Royal banner; and all quality,  
Pride pomp and circumstance of glorious War!  
And O you mortal engines, whose rude throats  
The immortal Jove's dread clamours counterfeit,  
Fare well! Othello's occupation gone.

You will no doubt visit all the theatres in Paris during your Stay. I think you will be pleased with them. "<http://www.masshist.org/publications/apde/portia.php?id=AFC06d119> accessed 10 April 2013.

<sup>78</sup> See Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, oil on canvas, 50 × 40.5 in (127 × 102.9 cm).

<sup>79</sup> Women playwrights voiced their opinions in a manner rarely allowed women with other protofeminist writers in Britain (and Europe) in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries who were increasingly discussing the problems with marriage, the need for more education for women, and even the possibility of women having a greater role in public life.

<sup>80</sup> For general history on theatre in eighteenth-century America see Gilliam Russell, *The Theatres of War: Performance, Politics, and Society 1793-1815* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995); Jared Brown. *The Theatre in America during the Revolution*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); T. Allston Brown, *A History of the New York Stage, from the First Performance in 1732 to 1901*. 3 vols. (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1903); William Dunla *History of the American Theatre*. 2<sup>nd</sup>. edition. 1832. Reprint (New York: Burt Franklin, 1963); Arthur Hornblow. *A History of the Theater in America from Its Beginnings to the Present*

*Time*. (2 volumes, New York, 1919); Glenn Hughes. *History of the American Theatre, 1700-1950*. (New York: Samuel French, 1951); Kevin Hutchings and Julia M. Wright, eds. *Transatlantic Literary Exchanges 1790-1870: Gender, Race, and Nation*, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2011); George C. D. O'Dell, *Annals of the New York Stage* (New York), 1927-49; Johnson, *Absence and Memory in Colonial American Theatre*; Arthur Hobson Quinn. *A History of the American Drama from the Beginning to the Civil War*. (New York: Harper and Bros., 1923).

<sup>81</sup> Mrs. Hallam, an actress of some repute who toured the provinces, left with her husband, Lewis Hallam, to tour America in 1752. She took three of her children with her: twelve-year-old Lewis, ten-year-old Adam and daughter Sarah (also identified as Helen or Cousin Nancy Hallam). Mrs. Hallam left behind her four-year-old daughter, Isabella, who was raised and trained for the theatre by London actress Ann Barrington, Isabella's aunt and Mrs. Hallam's sister-in-law. Mrs. Hallam, Ann Barrington and Isabella Mattocks, and to a lesser extent Nancy Hallam, established themselves as integral players in transatlantic Anglophone theatre. Ann Barrington and Isabella Mattocks achieved a level of fame upon the London Stage that Mrs. Hallam never achieved, though Mrs. Hallam became America's premier actress for several decades.

<sup>82</sup> Philip H. Highfill, et. al., *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, managers and Other Stage Personnel in London 1660-1800* (Carbondale, Ill: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984).

<sup>83</sup> Plays written by women that were performed throughout the transatlantic Anglophone world during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries serve as social and cultural barometers for understanding both changes taking place in this region as well as how these plays helped individuals scattered throughout the British transatlantic could remain culturally connected. For general history on Lewis Hallam and the London Company of Comedians/Old American Company see Harry E. Kollatz, "Historical report, Block 29, Building 17A: Part II - A Walking Shadow : A General History of the Colonial Theatre in Williamsburg, Virginia," Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Library Research Report Series - 299 Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Library Williamsburg, Virginia, 1990; Gilliam Russell, *The Theatres of War: Performance, Politics, and Society 1793-1815* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995); Jared Brown. *The Theatre in America during the Revolution*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1995; T. Allston Brown, *A History of the New York Stage, from the First Performance in 1732 to 1901*. 3 vols. (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1903); William Dunlapp *History of the American Theatre*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. 1832. Reprint (New York: Burt Franklin), 1963; Arthur Hornblow. *A History of the Theater in America from Its Beginnings to the Present Time*. (2 volumes, New York), 1919; Glenn Hughes. *History of the American Theatre, 1700-1950*. (New York: Samuel French, 1951); Kevin Hutchings and Julia M. Wright, eds. *Transatlantic Literary Exchanges 1790-1870: Gender, Race, and Nation*, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2011); George C. D. O'Dell, *Annals of the New York Stage* (New York), 1927-49; Johnson, *Absence and Memory in Colonial American Theatre*; Arthur Hobson Quinn. *A History of the American Drama from the Beginning to the Civil War*. (New York: Harper and Bros., 1923).

<sup>84</sup> The act of the anonymous publication is important here for it suggests that Warren was not willing to face public censure for her words, and also that she did not believe her words would be as powerful or influential if they were known to have come from a woman. See Barbara Caine, *English Feminism, 1780-1980*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Nancy F. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); Judith Fetterly, *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist A roach to American Fiction*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983); Linda Kauffman, ed. *Gender and Theory: Dialogues on Feminist Criticism*. (London: Blackwell, 2002); Rosalind Rosenberg, *Beyond Separate Spheres: Intellectual Roots of Modern Feminism*. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale UP, 1982); Showalter, *Sister's Choice*: Laura Brown, *Ends of Empire: Women and Ideology in Early Eighteenth-Century English Literature*. (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993); Schoefeld and Macheski, eds., *Curtain Calls*; Cheryl Turner, *Living by the Pen: Women Writers in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

<sup>85</sup> For general scholarship on Mercy Otis Warren see Jeffrey H. Richards, *Mercy Otis Warren* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995); Nancy Rubin Stuart, *The Muse of the Revolution: The Secret Pen of Mercy Otis*

*Warren and the Founding of a Nation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2008); Showalter, *Sister's Choice*; Laura Brown, *Ends of Empire: Women and Ideology in Early Eighteenth-Century English Literature*. (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993); Schofield, and Macheski. *Curtain Calls: Katherine Anthony, First Lady of the Revolution: The Life of Mercy Otis Warren* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1958); Jean Fritz, *Cast for a Revolution: Some American Females and Enemies, 1728-1814* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1972). For general scholarship on Hannah Cowley see Misty G. Anderson, *Playwrights and Eighteenth-Century Comedy: Negotiating Marriage on the London Stage* (New York: Palgrave, 2002); Betsy Bolton, *Women, Nationalism, and the Romantic Stage: Theatre and Politics in Britain, 1780-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Ellen Donkin, *Getting into the Act: Women Playwrights in London, 1776-1829* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Margarete Rubki, *Early Women Dramatists, 1550-1800* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998); Judith Stanton Phillips, "As This New-Found Path Attempting": Women Dramatists in England, 1660-1800," In Schoefeld and Macheski, eds., *Curtain Calls*.

<sup>86</sup> Jeffrey presents Warren as a writer who was shaped by the political and cultural maelstrom in America in which she found herself during the last three decades of the eighteenth century. As Rosemary Zagarri argues, Warren depended on men in her effort to write about politics, which is reflected in her plays which focus mostly on male characters with male points of view. In addition, Zagarri posits, Warren did not receive feminist support and was seemingly isolated from female points of view making her plays gender imbalanced. See Rosemary Zagarri, *A Women's Dilemma: Mercy Otis Warren and the American Revolution* (Wheeling, IL.: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1995).

<sup>87</sup> Warren's three political plays written, published and circulated throughout colonial America during this period helped American citizens in various colonies find ways to connect in order to support and encourage each other, and to see America as "we" and Britain as "the other" as America and Britain moved toward war. Theatre served to express frustrations of cultural diplomacy and intentionality. While many Americans had seen British theatre as a form of cultural persuasion (and at times a subtle if significant form of coercion) before the Revolution, Warren's polemical plays published on the cusp of war served a similar (coercive) purpose in using culture to address an underlying problem of political disunity in America caused by colonial lack of cohesion, and argue for a shared national unity in the face of what Warren saw to be British imperialistic oppression. Historian Nancy Rubin Stuart suggests that Warren's position as her husband's, James Warren's, private secretary, meant that she was privy to secret reports about the Revolution and presented her views as an eyewitness of the American Revolution. Her shared conversations with revolutionary thinkers and the encouragement she received from John Adams to continue writing satirical plays resulted in Warren writing numerous highly original American writings. However, I argue here that rather than simply being a political writer, Warren enacted intracolonial cultural diplomacy, using theatre, rather than simply writing political pamphlets, to engage, entertain, and inform colonial audiences of the political state of affairs in Massachusetts and in extension, in colonial British America. Even if Warren had chosen to write political pamphlets, and even if she had published such political pamphlets anonymously as she did her plays, using theatre as a form of cultural exchange was a clever move. Plays were considered to be one of the highest forms of cultural entertainment and edification during the eighteenth century and people read plays casually, and also discussed them in coffeehouses and in public arenas.

<sup>88</sup> British playwright Hannah Cowley (1743-1809) predominantly wrote domestic comedies that were wildly popular on the London stage and were performed throughout the transatlantic Anglophone world. Not concerned with political tensions sweeping through the transatlantic by 1776 when her first play, *The Runaway*, was first produced by David Garrick at London's Drury Lane Theatre, in general, Cowley concerned herself with "safer" female topics such as marriage, family life, social customs, leaving political unrest out of her plays almost entirely. Unlike Warren's husband, who was a well-to-do American Revolutionary, Cowley's husband Thomas, was a government official and part-time journalist. When Cowley's husband moved to India in 1783, he left her with her three or four children, and Cowley was forced to write in order to support her family. Her play, *A Bold Stroke for a Husband* came out in 1783, the same year her husband left. Her career as a playwright spanned almost two decades from 1776 to 1794 and for over ten years she was the sole supporter of herself and her children.<sup>88</sup> Considering Cowley wrote during the height of the American Revolution, it is somewhat surprising that she makes no mention of the

war, though London audiences may have been less interested in the conflict. Cowley's later darker forays into tragedy were not as well accepted by London audiences and she gave up writing for the theatre altogether by 1794.

<sup>89</sup> Brenda Murphy, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to American Women Playwrights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1999); Amelia Howe Kritzer, *Plays by Early American Women, 1775-1850* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1995).

## CHAPTER 2

### ACTING LIKE WOMEN, 1660-1752

#### Argument

Observing a 1629 performance that included French women, a Londoner commented; “Some Frenchwomen, or monsters rather... attempted to act a French play at the Blackfriars play-house, an impudent, shameful, unwomanish, graceless, if not more than wantonish attempt.”<sup>1</sup> The male observer added; “those women did attempt thereby, giving just offence to all virtuous and well-disposed persons in this town, to act a certain lascivious and unchaste comedye in the French tongue, at the Blackfriars. Glad I am to saye they were hissed, hooted, and pippin-pelted from the stage.”<sup>2</sup> Yet just over thirty years later, when Charles II legally introduced women to the theatre, London audiences seemed happily intrigued rather than horrified.<sup>3</sup> During the Restoration Era from 1660-1710, Anglophone actresses emerged as some of the world’s first celebrities.<sup>4</sup> With their pretty figures, witty repartee, obvious sexual appeal both onstage and off, these new actresses—actual women parading onstage rather than female impersonators—fit the bill. That’s not to say that female impersonators did not have their own level of celebrity status as performers and as captivating transgendered females, but female actresses became public figures celebrated in a manner unknown before for common women.

For the first time, the London public could participate in the tête-à-tête between actresses whose lives straddled the slums of London and royalty whom they entertained nightly. These women played everything from ingénue (in spite of many of them first having been prostitutes) to duchess decked out in the borrowed clothes of ladies of the court.<sup>5</sup> Actresses transformed their voices, mannerisms, and clothing—wearing both the cast-off gowns and the coats and trousers of Britain’s social elite—all significant markers of British social classes. Sumptuary laws in England were loosened for theatre (prior to 1660 actors had worn the donated clothes of female aristocrats

onstage) and actresses began dressing offstage in the same manner that they had dressed onstage in character, thus further blurring social boundaries. In addition, by taking their style of dress offstage, these publicly adored actresses (often women raised in or near brothels during this early period) suggested that they knew that the British social class structure was arbitrary and that they (or anyone else for that matter not born into privilege) deserved a place amongst Britain's social elite. Our contemporary view of "celebrity" associates the term with fame and public adoration, wealth and power, and an extravagant or generous lifestyle, all descriptions that could be used to describe early Restoration actresses.

Accepting actresses as legitimate performers and raising them to celebrity status allowed actresses to effect significant changes both in Restoration theatre specifically and late seventeenth-century Anglophone society more generally. Working as stage professionals, successful actresses were marketed by theatre managers in order to ensure fiscal success and earned enough money to allow them to live independently. Often actresses flirted with particular members of the audience (particularly members of the royal court) while audiences watched. Many of these women succeeded in changing their lives, and in turn challenged British society's restrictive social order. Ultimately, the stage allowed Restoration actresses to cross previously impermeable social boundaries and they were responsible for making several significant changes to Anglophone theatre.

First, actresses literally changed the face of theatre by taking over roles from female impersonators—highly-professional, well-trained and equally beautiful transgendered performers with their own public following. Second, physical interactions between actors and actresses took on new meaning in that, an actress being strangled (or sexually harangued) by Othello for example, provided more realism (and titillation) on the Restoration stage when the male actor held a real woman in his grasp. Third, the rise of sexually explicit theatre occurred as a result of theatre managers wishing to please Charles II, who had multiple affairs with actresses. Fourth,

actresses inspired Restoration playwrights to write plays specifically focused on exploiting public interest in their off-stage intrigues, resulting in a case of art (plays) imitating life (actress affairs), while at the same time life (actresses became mistresses to kings and members of the court) imitated art (in the imaginative world of the play, anything was possible). Fifth, because of this interest in the lives and intrigues of newly rising celebrity actresses, performers' names were now published. This phenomenon of publishing a performer's name or associating an actor with a particular character role did not exist before 1660.

Actresses also changed class expectations in English society. Because many of the early Restoration actresses began their lives as prostitutes, by wearing the cast-off clothing of the aristocracy onstage, actresses indirectly challenged sumptuary laws and blurred the social lines (and rules) soundly established in the English class-based society. In addition, once they became celebrated performers these women managed to separate themselves from the marginalized and stigmatized occupation of prostitution and changed the view of what it meant to be a "public" woman. The only real difference between actresses and prostitutes after 1660 was that actresses were generally forgiven their transgressions (onstage and offstage) while prostitutes continued to be viewed as socially destructive and morally bereft. Actresses further challenged the validity of a British class-based society when they became mistresses and wives of kings, aristocrats and gentlemen. Certainly by doing so, actresses became England's newest and most accessible and identifiable members of the royalty. The British public could relate to these women, gossip about them, emulate and admire their mannerisms, style of clothing, and attitudes. The change in audience attitude in accepting women as public performers highlights significant cultural and social changes that took place in Britain during the Restoration Era that were later reflected in America between 1752 to 1800.<sup>6</sup>

While Restoration actresses enjoyed early public success, women playwrights struggled to gain similar public approbation. While being a woman and possessing a woman's form and

voice worked in an actress's favor, writing with authority and possessing a "woman's pen"<sup>7</sup> worked against these early playwrights. Playwriting as an intellectual endeavor was still considered a male profession and as such women playwrights struggled to legitimize their work publicly. Thus, while British audiences quickly adapted to and enjoyed the physical presence of women onstage, they were reluctant to accept plays authored by women. In order to be accepted many women published their work anonymously or made public apologies for intellectual weaknesses in their writing that excused any shortcomings caused by their gender.

Women's plays reflected the same themes as their male counterparts; their plays were no less sexual, witty, or politically engaged. However, during the last decade of the seventeenth century, the tone of plays became more conservative, as did public acceptance (or rejection) of women's plays. By 1737, with the passing of Britain's Theatre Licensing Act, censorship of plays and competition to produce them increased sharply. Women who wished to succeed as playwrights learned that it was better not to stand out. It became rare for a British woman playwright writing between 1737 and 1800 to challenge social norms, openly criticize government or take an overt stand for the equality of the sexes.<sup>8</sup> Most women chose to write sentimental comedies and light-hearted entertainments and their success is reflected in how their plays were incorporated into the transatlantic and transnational British literary canon.

Rather than attempting to examine every actress or playwright of the period, this chapter examines the work and lives of some of the most influential women involved with theatre in the transatlantic Anglophone world between 1660 and 1752. These actresses, playwrights, and theatre managers suggest how Anglophone theatre became a place of empowerment for women, how women used theatre to change their own lives and in turn, how they helped change, for good or ill, the public persona of women in Anglophone society. In addition, this chapter examines the inner workings of Restoration theatre that led to the rise of women actresses and playwrights into prominent positions in theatre. It explores the historical events that influenced the professionalism

of the first English actresses and helped bring them almost meteoric fame. This chapter also looks at the influence of several of these first professional theatre women on later generations of performers and writers. Next, it contends that the idea of the cultivation of the celebrity (and different types of “celebrity”) arising during the late 17<sup>th</sup> century directly resulted from the experiences of several prominent early professional English actresses.

This chapter also tackles the difficulties women playwrights confronted in facing gender identity. Women writers could either be considered too intellectually masculine thus directly challenging contemporary views that women were the “weaker sex” or, on the flip side, their work could be discounted (regardless of the subject matter) simply because it was written by one of the “weaker sex.” Because of these complications, women writers could (and many did) hide their gender behind anonymity so that their work might be judged more fairly. While actresses might hide their female bodies in breeches, playing with the idea of gender and including audiences in on the game, women playwrights could leave the audience guessing at authorship of a play or performance by leaving off their names or they might write an apology excusing their work before judgement, as weak because women playwrights challenged British society’s belief in women’s intellectual inferiority. Playwriting was already critical, competitive, and threatened to compromise an author’s reputation in a very public way if a work failed to entertain or impress audiences, regardless of one’s gender. Thus engaging in the more intellectual pursuit of writing for and “educating” audiences was a potentially risky endeavor.

Actresses with their physical presence onstage showed the public how to dress, how to act, and how social class structure could be challenged. Nell Gwyn (1650-1687, mistress to Charles II and mother of two of his sons); sisters Anne Marshall (fl. 1661-1682) and Rebecca Marshall (fl. 1663-1677); Mary Lee (*née* Aldridge, and later Mary Slingsby after marrying Sir Charles Slingsby); Mary Saunderson Betterton (1637-1712) and her ward Anne Bracegirdle (1671-1748); and Mary Knep (fl. 1664-1681), mistress to diarist Samuel Pepys each became

celebrities shortly after appearing onstage. Nell Gwyn may be considered to be the first “celebrity” actress of significance in Anglophone theatre, particularly in her ascendancy from orange girl to King’s mistress. As such this chapter also examines Gwyn’s contributions to theatre, the importance of gossip in propelling an actress into a celebrity, and her cultural influence as an actress. Yet not all orange-girls-turned-actresses like Gwyn achieved fame and fortune and we look briefly at Betty Mackerel (fl. 1674), a well-known Restoration whore and orange girl in the Covent Garden district.<sup>9</sup> In addition, understanding the transition from a male-only acting company to having women perform onstage provides insight into how female impersonators like Edward Kynaston, had to adapt or find a new profession.

In a third part of this chapter, we examine the role Restoration women playwrights played in shaping Anglophone theatre and British culture. Like actresses, playwrights used theatre as an outlet to achieve a level of public success not known before to women writers. Aphra Behn (c. 1640-1689), for example, wrote bawdy plays that reflected the popular aesthetic of Restoration theatre. Writing three decades later, actress turned playwright Susanna Centlivre used Behn’s work as a model for writing her own plays, although the times were again changing by 1700 and Centlivre’s sentimental comedies reflected the changing, more conservative moral tone emerging in British society. A comparative look at two plays written by these two playwrights, Aphra Behn’s *The Rover, Part I* (1677) and Susanna Centlivre’s *The Perjur’d Husband* (1700), suggests ways in which these two women playwrights commodified women’s bodies and their own words in order to make a profit, and sheds light on our understanding of how difficult it was for women playwrights to be true to themselves as women while providing entertainment that English Restoration and eighteenth-century audiences demanded.

### **Anglophone Theatre and Historical Setting**

During the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, three consecutive British monarchs: Henry VIII (1491-1547), Elizabeth I (1533-1603) and James I (1566-1625) each supported British theatre. However by 1642, a largely Puritan Parliament heavily influenced by religious conservatives banned theater on moral grounds during the Interregnum when Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658) and later his son, Richard (1626-1712) served as Lords Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland, and Ireland 1642-1660. When Charles II (1630-1685) returned to England in 1660 and was restored to the throne, he also restored theatre and legalized women's participation as public performers. Charles II had resided during the previous nine years in France, the Republic of the United Netherlands, and Spanish Netherlands and had thus been exposed to public performances by actresses. The tradition of women performing publicly in Europe was not new. In fact, Italian actresses had appeared in *commedia dell'arte* in the 1560s, Spanish actresses performed publicly by 1587, and French actresses were regularly seen onstage by 1598.<sup>10</sup> Likewise, in the Spanish Netherlands women were known to have performed publicly in Amsterdam in 1655, and traveling companies comprised of Dutch actresses had performed in Northern Europe earlier in at least 1649. Male impersonators in the Dutch Republic were still playing women's roles during the early transitional (seventeenth-century) period just as they were in Britain.<sup>11</sup> Since Charles II spent many of his formative and young adult years living abroad in countries watching actresses perform publicly, his familiarity with and acceptance of actresses led to his desire to bring actresses to the London stage.<sup>12</sup>

Puritan society and the government under Oliver Cromwell intended to shut down theatre completely, but Cromwell's restrictions on theatre during his rule (1649-1658) may have ironically opened the door for women to become involved in theatre. The publication in 1633 of Puritan polemicist William Prynne's *Histrio-Mastix: The Player's Scourge, or Actor's Tragedy* (a work of over 1000 pages) represents the Puritan distaste for English Renaissance theatre.<sup>13</sup> *Histrio-Mastix* particularly railed against women acting, adding the entry "Women-Actors,

notorious whores” to his index.<sup>14</sup> Since English women were not publicly allowed to perform when *Histrion-Mastix* was published, Prynne’s comments offer a clear attack on Queen Henrietta Maria, the French queen of Charles I, whose court (filled with French women who came from a country where women were allowed to perform publicly) often put on plays with women (including the queen) performing for court guests. Prynne’s comments against Queen Henrietta Maria and her court resulted in his imprisonment, extensive fines and in the lopping off of his ears.<sup>15</sup>

Ten years after the publication of *Histrion-Mastix*, Oliver Cromwell’s Puritan government publicly denounced theatre, and on 6 September 1642, public theatres in England were formally closed by ordinance.<sup>16</sup> However, the governmental theatre ban did not stop interested parties from hosting private performances.<sup>17</sup> In fact, these private performances actually encouraged women to take part in theatre behind the scenes, preparing them for the day when they were legally allowed to act in public. While theatre scholars generally see that Cromwell and Puritan influence in early seventeenth-century England restricted theatre and women’s participation in theatre, I argue somewhat unconventionally that the limitations put into action by the English Puritan government between 1642 and 1660 ultimately resulted in significant opportunities for women onstage.<sup>18</sup> Although Cromwell’s Puritan government aimed to restrict public performances that were “unnatural” and offensive, and embraced Prynne’s view that actresses were “notorious whores,” Puritan restrictions made it not only possible for women to access the stage, they made it much easier for women to compete successfully with female impersonators or *travestiti* for limited female roles, particularly since male performers did not actively train for almost two decades. English audiences before 1660 applauded and accepted female impersonators or *travestiti*, accepting external constructions of female gender identity based on feminine clothing and gestures rather than the lack of facial hair. Clothing had long been a mode through which actors (and later actresses) crossed gender and social boundaries in a variety of cross-dressing roles. Yet

by limiting acting (and thus opportunities) to private performances, Cromwell and the Puritans opened up opportunities for actresses to compete for roles against equally untrained or poorly trained female impersonators. Also, in order to help theatre regain its previous popularity before Puritan interference, the return of theatre needed something new (and gimmicky) to draw audiences. Allowing women to join theatre companies added to theatre's intrigue while at the same time tested social expectations and the previous assumption that only men could (or should) act.<sup>19</sup> Thus, I argue, instead of limiting public performances which they saw as morally bereft, and by limiting as well how men and women acted in their everyday public lives, Cromwell's government actually deconstructed limits on gender identity, opened up opportunities for women on the stage, and increased audience desire for theatre to return.

### **Inner Workings of Restoration Theatre**

On August 21, 1660, not quite three months after his return to Britain, Charles II temporarily allowed two groups of professional actors to form companies under a charter: the King's Company, under theatre manager Thomas Killigrew (1612-1683), and the Duke's Company, under theatre manager Sir William D' Avenant (1606-1668). As suggested by their names, each company was supported by one royal: Charles II sponsored the King's Company; his brother the Duke of York (later James II of England) sponsored the Duke's Company. Both the King's Company and the Duke's Company set up their theatres in recently converted tennis courts.<sup>20</sup> The King's Company presented performances first in Gibbon's Tennis Court, then in Lisle's Tennis Court (both venues that influenced future theatre building styles). Two years later, on April 25, 1662, the government under Charles II issued formal letters of patent to these companies (resulting in a hereditary monopoly on the theatre for Killigrew, manager of the King's Company, and his family). In 1663, Killigrew opened the King's Playhouse, later known as the Theatre Royal Drury Lane. The Duke's Company began performing at the old Salisbury

Court Theatre and then in the Cockpit in Drury Lane before moving more permanently to a new building on the site that had previously housed Lisle's Tennis Court, and now called Lincoln's Inn Fields. Under patent restrictions, however, only these royal theatres could produce spoken dramatic pieces and thus the establishment under license of the Duke's and King's Companies resulted in a monopoly that stifled the growth of theatre in Britain during the late seventeenth century. The result was that other non-patent (albeit licensed) theatres now had to incorporate music and/or dance into their productions, because they were only allowed to stage less serious dramatic works.<sup>21</sup>

While women had long participated behind the scenes in Anglophone theatre as seamstresses, maids, orange girls, audience members, servants, and prostitutes who worked the third tier (the highest level of the theatre where male audience members could pay for personalized entertainment), Charles II's royal patent gave Thomas Killigrew and William D'Avenant the right to form professional acting companies with women. The patent, first issued in 1660 then reissued in 1662, used language that directly linked the inclusion of women to raising moral standards in English theatre:

Foreasmuch as many plays formerly acted, do containe severall prophane, obscene, and scurrilous passages, and the women's parts therein have been acted by men in the habit of women, at which some have taken offense; for the preventing of these abuses for the future, we doe straitly charge, command, and enjoyn that henceforth, no...play shall be acted by either of the said companies contening any passages offensive to piety or good manners...And we doe likewise permit and give leave that all the women's parts to be acted in either of the said two companies may be performed by women so long as these recreations, which by reason of the abuses aforesaid were scandalous and offensive, may by such reformation be esteemed not only harmless delight but useful instruction.<sup>22</sup>

In practice, in spite of Charles II's claim, actresses did not necessarily raise the moral tone of theatre, at least not during their induction. Most early actresses were working women who prepared for the stage through the various occupations as "public women," which included working as street vendors, orange girls, alehouse wives, traveling performers at fairs, and prostitutes."<sup>23</sup>

Restoration playwrights took advantage of having women onstage to create heightened sexual tension onstage. Playwrights wrote in conversations rife with sexual innuendos, created gender-bending cross-dressing plot twists that allowed actresses to dress in the more shapely and tighter fitting male costumes, and rakes on the prowl for sexual conquests paced their stages. Actresses performed as characters who possessed significant sexual knowledge and who bandied about cleverly licentious wit. Aphra Behn, for example, empowers her three female characters, Florinda, Hellena and Angellica Bianca, (disguised in the topsy-turvy world of Carnival) in *The Rover*, to seek out mates. Yet even while these three women challenged social rules in aggressively pursuing partners as unconventional female characters, they were conventionally forced into the only real “roles” British society allows them at the time: chaste wife, devoted nun and licentious courtesan.

In 1610, Henry Jackson wrote about a female impersonator’s performance; “Indeed, Desdemona, killed by her husband, in death moved us especially when, as she lay in her bed, her face alone implored the pity of the audience.”<sup>24</sup> Yet the prologue for a revival of *Othello* in 1660 he suggested that women were more convincing and better preferred in the roles of women;

I come, unknown to any of the rest  
To tell the news, I saw the lady drest...  
But to the point:--In this reforming age  
We have intents to civilize the stage.  
Our women are defective, and so siz’d  
You’ld think they were some of the guard disguis’d  
For to speak truth, men act that are between  
Forty and fifty, wenches of fifteen  
With bone so large and nerve so in compliant  
When you call *Desdemona*, enter *Giant*.<sup>25</sup>

In spite of their initial appeal as something new and different in theatre, it took decades for actresses to become the standard performers in female roles. Between the 1660s and 1680s men continued to act in female roles, and these transgendered or *travesti* roles continued to be wildly popular with some of the period’s favorite performers making their names as characters of the

opposite sex.<sup>26</sup> Theatre historians Elizabeth Howe, Jane Moody, and Cynthia Lowenthal argue convincingly that late seventeenth-century English audiences may have imagined actresses appearing as women onstage as more natural characters than female impersonators or *travestiti* and thus audiences were more willing to accept the public appearances of actresses by 1660 because they now saw them as more morally acceptable in their roles.<sup>27</sup> When performers, male or female, took the stage, they were judged on both their visual appearance and their aural performance.<sup>28</sup> As one contemporary wrote, “not the apparel onely [sic], but the gait, the gestures, the voice, the passions of a woman” had to be convincing.<sup>29</sup>

Between 1660 and 1670, Restoration audiences did not yet see women as a critical component to the theatre. For almost two decades after the legalization of women actresses, female impersonators continued to take on women’s roles.<sup>30</sup> Actor Charles Hart established his reputation by playing the Duchess in James Shirley’s *The Cardinal* (1641). After the appearance of actresses, Hart continued to perform in female roles but also began to take on more male roles. Edward Kynaston (1640-1712), a member of the Duke’s Company, also continued to perform in female roles for several years before transitioning over to male roles, and was described by diarist Samuel Pepys as “the loveliest lady that ever I saw in my life, only her voice not very good.”<sup>31</sup> Additionally, Pepys’ recalled “Kinaston, the boy” in *Epicæne*, appearing “first, as a poor woman in ordinary clothes, to please Morose; then in fine clothes, as a gallant, and in them was clearly the prettiest woman in the whole house, and lastly, as a man; and then likewise did appear the handsomest man in the house.”<sup>32</sup> Kynaston’s ambiguous sexuality certainly had significant audience appeal and reinforces the idea that when women were placed onstage they, too, became sexually ambiguous while performing in breeches roles. In keeping with the admiration of the character’s form, regardless of the performer’s sex, Pepys also commented on seeing actress Nell Gwyn in a breeches role in William D’Avenant’s *The Man’s Master*, finding “Nell in her boys clothes, mighty pretty.”<sup>33</sup> This ambiguity, and the construction and staging of gender on the

restoration stage made Restoration drama a significant turning point in Anglophone theatre in its reinforcement of the sexual ambiguity and the fluidity of constructed gender roles of men and women. Female impersonators had to take greater care of their appearance than actresses if they were to be convincing once women began performing. Actor Colley Cibber wrote in his autobiography that Charles II became greatly incensed during one delayed performance because the beautiful Kynaston “was not shav’d,” for one of his roles portraying the Queen.<sup>34</sup>

An interesting shift occurred when Thomas Killigrew, who employed a large number of actresses, also imported *castrati* to England in 1667 as performers.<sup>35</sup> While these new male performers possessed lovely voices, had delicate figures, lacked facial hair, and entertained audiences regularly, historian Dympna Callaghan argues that male audience members did not as readily accept these performers as they had male impersonators; “*Castrati* were now understood to be male impersonators rather than actors whose objective was to impersonate femininity... Thus castrati made the threat of castration visible, ‘an offense to the eye.’”<sup>36</sup> Thus, as long as men remained physically unchanged as performers in female roles, they were accepted by the Restoration public. Once, however, they were physically altered to perform as and look like women, audiences saw *castrati* as “unmannish” and their performances were viewed as unnatural.

The world of fantasy and reality could easily be blurred both onstage and off as actresses from the streets of London who portrayed queens and duchesses onstage became mistresses to the king, shaking up the long-established social order in British society. Onstage women raised in London’s poorest neighborhoods sashayed in front of audiences in the gowns of duchesses. They played queens and virgins, cuckolds and brides, island princesses and exotic queens.<sup>37</sup> Restoration theatre also allowed more relaxed social interactions between the sexes.<sup>38</sup> Women like Nell Gwyn and Moll Davis (whom diarist Samuel Pepys’ wife called “the most impertinent slut...in the world”)<sup>39</sup> rose to celebrity status in all likelihood because of their off-stage intrigues and their position as mistresses to the king rather than because of their skills as actresses.

These early actresses might not have improved theatre's moral tone but they did act as role models to future generations of actresses, both in how they managed their public lives as actresses and in how they conducted their private lives as mistresses, wives, and mothers. They laid the groundwork for public acceptance of women as public performers earned and thus they helped define attitudes regarding women's roles in the public sphere. As social conventions and audience expectations became more conservative toward the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth centuries, many of the Restoration plays were banned or rewritten for more conservative audiences. Roles for women by the beginning of the eighteenth century shifted away from characters who engaged in sexual banter and toward women whose roles were defined by societal expectations, and reinforced conventional roles open to women as spinsters, nuns, or wives. Along with this change in the roles available for women, at the turn of the eighteenth century, Restoration women playwrights like Aphra Behn received harsher criticism for their sexually liberal work and their plays fell from regular performance rotation.

### **Scholarship on Early Anglophone Actresses**

Elizabeth Howe presents an exhaustive account of actresses participating in Restoration Theatre between 1660 and 1700 in *The First English Actresses: Women and Drama 1660–1700*. Howe suggests that the transition from theatres only employing male actors for female roles to theatres hiring female actresses was not exceedingly smooth. Just as actresses did not immediately displace female impersonators onstage, Howe argues that the arrival of women onstage did not result in immediate emancipation for women in London. Instead, she posits that Restoration audiences saw this moment as “the arrival of female bodies for public display.”<sup>40</sup> Howe claims early Restoration actresses were “exploited for their beauty and their sexual vulnerability” thus they “confirmed, rather than challenged, the attitudes to gender in their society.”<sup>41</sup> As previously suggested, productions became increasingly bawdy, which Howe

describes as “sex-comedy” often presenting a husband who is made a fool while his wife and her lover enjoy their dalliances<sup>42</sup> and Restoration playwrights also used women’s bodies for spectacle creating “breeches roles” in which women appeared onstage in tight-fitting men’s clothing. For almost two decades female impersonators worked in competition with and alongside actresses, with audiences appreciating both sets of performers. While female impersonators provided English theatre with a fluid gender construction during the early Restoration period, the addition of actresses contributed even further to the idea of a fluid gender construct as they appeared in cross-dressing roles while challenging social class constructs. In essence then, Restoration theatre allowed (perhaps encouraged) actresses to change the way British society saw gender, class and women’s roles in society.

Howe also argues that these first actresses challenged contemporary social views. By appearing publicly, actresses automatically aligned themselves as “public women” alongside prostitutes. Although Howe does recognize correctly that the first English actresses received accolades for their performances as professionals, many of these actresses actually came from London’s slums, had worked in or grown up amongst prostitution, and became mistresses to London’s social elites, receiving money and privileges that came along with being a gentleman’s paramour. So while many of the first Restoration actresses might not technically have been prostitutes, many of these women did perform in sexually explicit roles, and did exchange their favors for money or social standing. Indeed performing a loaded sexual dialogue with a male actor onstage might well be considered oral performance prostitution, especially during the late seventeenth century. Some of the less successful actresses might well have returned to prostitution having failed onstage.

The addition of women onstage, Howe suggests, eventually enacted changes in British society. Even though these early actresses reinforced female stereotypes in their roles (adulterous wife, naïve virgin, shrewish old maid), Howe posits that the growing presence of women

influenced the type of subject matter playwrights produced and thus transformed the direction of Restoration Theatre. While eighteenth-century theatre manager Colley Cibber (1671-1757) wrote, “The characters of Women, on former Theatres, were perform’d by Boys, or young Men of the most effeminate Aspect. And what Grace, or Master-Stroke of Action, can we conceive such ungainly Hoydens to have been capable of?”<sup>43</sup> Howe argues the opposite. She believes playwrights created specific characters to match the personalities of these actresses, which resulted in the typecasting of actresses into certain character roles. Elizabeth Barry, for example, became typecast as a tragic actress because of the success of her role as Minimia in Thomas Otway’s popular play, *The Orphan, or The Unhappy Marriage* (1680).

Howe questions whether the presence of women onstage changed male views of women, leading the male public to objectify women even more than before they were allowed to perform publicly. I believe though that instead of becoming objectified, these early actresses and women playwrights became more empowered in crafting their own identities and asserting who they wanted to be and how society should view them. Howe also argues that while current feminist authors embrace the liberation of seventeenth-century women onstage, in fact these early actresses were being exploited rather than liberated. I would disagree with Howe here and argue instead that these Restoration actresses and women playwrights cannot be labeled as “feminist” in the modern sense of the term that suggests these women asserted their own female identity since these women had to work within the structure of late seventeenth-century society in order to be accepted. If they stood out too much or asserted their independence too quickly or even attempted to compete directly with men, the society in which they lived and worked might have reacted negatively. Rather, early Restoration actresses and women playwrights worked to make places for themselves as working women in a previously male-dominated profession, moving from behind the scenes as seamstresses, maids, and dressers, all supporting positions, to taking leading roles in plays written specifically for and featuring almost exclusively the most popular new actresses. So

rather than seeing women alone as victims of exploitation on the Restoration stage, we should see that regardless of their gender audiences judged, admired, lusted after, and purchased the privilege to see the bodies, faces, voices, actions and personalities that comprised the Restoration actors' performances.

In decrying the exploitation of Restoration actresses, Howe assumes that these actresses (and taking it one step further, all Restoration performers) maintained minimal control over their life choices. Certainly it seems likely that as a good marketing ploy, theatre managers would have exploited actresses and women playwrights as novelties for the first few years in order to gain audience attention. Yet I would argue that Restoration theatre women benefited from all the initial attention that came with the novelty of women writing plays and performing professionally. Because of all the attention and exploitation they received, within approximately two decades actresses had replaced most of the female impersonators on the Restoration stage and the productions of women playwrights received regular performance rotations. Moreover, I suggest that without all of this contested public attention, which theatre managers saw as an opportunity to fill their coffers, it is quite possible that these women might have easily been dismissed as a pleasant deviation from theatre tradition. Further, without the backing of theatre managers or continued public interest such exploitations caused, these women might never have gone on to reshape Anglophone theatre as they did which in turn resulted in the break down British of social class structure and the confrontation of established gender roles.

Finally, Howe suggests that female impersonators had to shift into male roles if they wished to remain performers, which in turn increased competition for the limited male roles, and required male performers to somehow lose their well-trained feminized affectations onstage. Howe doesn't see that this action caused men to be placed into more defined male roles, or reinforced social gender constructs by emphasizing who performed the roles rather than how they were performed. Indeed, the tradition of cross-dressing that continued in Restoration theatre

attempted to return some of the gender intrigue to the stage once women began performing. Actresses performed in stereotypical roles as lovers, mistresses, rape victims, and cuckolds. But they also appeared in roles *as* lovers dressed in breeches, threatened ingénues, and wielded weapons. I would suggest that Restoration actresses and women playwrights became empowered by their new roles within Anglophone theatre in part since their bodies of work (both their bodies as performance and their plays) were scrutinized even more intensely because of their gender. The idea of just how much women's bodies were scrutinized comprises a significant amount of historical criticism on Restoration theatre women, as Howe's comments suggest.

Will Pritchard sidesteps Howe's assertion that women were exploited on the stage and argues in *Outward Appearance: The Female Exterior in Restoration London* that actresses influenced social norms by becoming (and displaying) the new emblem for femininity. He believes that "there was a growing tolerance of and market for women who displayed themselves publicly."<sup>44</sup> Pritchard's perspective through a male lens posits that Restoration men in the audience were conflicted about their reactions seeing women presented onstage in various female stereotypes. He argues, "Men both encouraged and stigmatized women's public and bodily displays; they provided a ready audience for them, as well as a chorus of voices ready to mark them as scandalous."<sup>45</sup> I would agree with Pritchard's view that Restoration male audience members likely objectified and vilified actresses, but I would also add that late seventeenth-century men were not alone in their judgments or condemnation of actresses and women playwrights as immoral or salacious. Male audience members had previously objectified and admired female impersonators before the rise of actresses and women in the audience were equally judgmental of women or men performing in and writing for theatre as Behn's Preface to *The Lucky Chance* suggests;

Ladies, for its further Justification to you, be pleas'd to know, that the first Copy of this Play was read by several Ladys of very great Quality, and unquestioned Fame, and received their most favourable Opinion, not one charging it with the Crime, that some have been pleas'd to find in the Acting. Other Ladys who saw it more than once, whose

Quality and Vertue can sufficiently justifie any thing they design to favour, were pleas'd to say, they found an Entertainment in it very far from scandalous; and for the Generality of the Town, I found by my Receipts it was not thought so Criminal.<sup>46</sup>

While Restoration theatre women might have wished for more universal acceptance by their own sex, women may have been amongst their harshest critics because how actresses and playwrights portrayed women onstage was how society may have begun to view women offstage and women in the audience did not necessarily appreciate being portrayed in a negative light.

In *Fashioning Femininity and English Renaissance Drama* Karen Newman takes an even more feminist approach than Pritchard in arguing “[h]ow woman’s body is invested with significance is determined in part by how it is utilized politically and economically, to reproduce not only biologically but socially as well.”<sup>47</sup> Newman explores the idea of how the onstage portrayal of women began to reach a wider audience as plays from London made their way both as performance and in print to outlying British cities and towns. Like Howe, she recognizes the exploitative manner with which theatre managers treated actresses and women playwrights, but argues that women’s roles contributed to political commentary. Further, she argues that women began to be seen both as important biologically (as mothers) and socially (as quasi-revolutionaries). Newman’s more inclusive view of women in the public and private spectrum is appealing but she focuses on women’s bodies as objects rather than as social *actors* or actors affecting social change. In addition, and deviating from Newman, Pritchard and Howe, Alice Clark in her seminal work, *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century*, argued at the turn of the twentieth century that “the economic position of women, must be considered also in relation to another special function which women exercise in society, namely the part which they play in the psychic and moral reactions between the sexes.”<sup>48</sup> Clark’s view that Anglophone theatre women reflected the moral tone of society is important because it goes beyond the idea of simply exploring women’s physical presence onstage and will be addressed in later chapters.

Women's participation as audience members adds to the complexity of understanding how effective theatre women were in convincing the public of their moral integrity and acting talent. While men in the audience might have been admiring women and even seeking out potential sexual partners, most of the women audience members judged women's performances and their plays by how they presented their female characters. Such a public representation of female "types" reflected (or suggested) how everyday women should act. In considering the continued popularity of cross-dressing as done in Shakespearean theatre (which continued to be popular throughout the eighteenth century), theatre historian Jean Howard argues that "the very fact that women went to the theatre to see [cross-dressing males] attests to the contradictions surrounding this social institution [of the theatre]. Women at the public theatre were doing many of the very things that the polemicists who attacked cross-dressing rallied against."<sup>49</sup> Howard continues, "They were gadding about outside the walls of their own houses, spending money on a new consumer pleasure, allowing themselves to become a spectacle to the male gaze."<sup>50</sup> Howard suggests as I have previously argued, that theatre itself "blurred the boundaries between degrees and genders by having men of low estate wear the clothes of noblemen and of women"<sup>51</sup> a practice that would continue once actresses entered the stage and began performing in the cast-off garments of duchesses and queens. Howard argues that social positions, became increasingly undefined within theatre; "by having one's money, and not one's blood or title, decide how high and how well one sat, or whether, indeed, one stood."<sup>52</sup> Finally, Howard states that multiple social and cultural forces collided simply by attending theatre; "To go to the theatre was, in short, to be positioned at the crossroads of cultural change and contradiction—and this seems... especially true for the middle-class female playgoer, who, by her practices was calling into question the 'place' of woman, perhaps more radically than did Shakespeare's fictions of cross-dressing."<sup>53</sup> Cross-dressing and the transgendering of characters as it existed in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century theatre blurred what it meant to be male or female in British society. The

consistent appeal of theatre to audience members, male and female, in watching cross-dressing performers also reinforces Newman's previously argued belief that femininity was and continues to be a social construction. Yet understanding the roles (literal and figurative) of Restoration actresses is not as simple as arguing that gender/roles are social constructs. Perhaps because of the long-standing tradition of actors appearing in cross-dressing roles, audiences of the period seemed quite interested in participating in the performance themselves: attending performances to see and be seen, and watching the sexual banter play out between actor and actress and between particular elite members in the audience and actresses.<sup>54</sup>

Finally, the constant thread of paternalism wove its way into the narrative of theatre women and pervaded women's involvement as actresses and as playwrights from 1660 through the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>55</sup> Actresses were often mentored, taught, censored or overshadowed by men in the theatre and in public. Like most women during this period, actresses were associated with and identified by the men with whom they interacted whether it was within theatre companies managed by men, male plays in which they acted, actors with whom they performed, or the lovers with whom they had relationships. Toward the end of the eighteenth century actresses began to attain autonomy, but even then such autonomy took over a century to arrive and was often met publicly with accusations of actresses being social deviants, and women playwrights were also held more accountable for moral laxity than their male counterparts.

Because men controlled seventeenth and eighteenth-century British society, they also drafted and reinforced social and cultural norms, including theatre. The Theatre Act of 1737, for example, dictated which plays could be staged in Britain, increased competition for new politically-acceptable plays, and ultimately discouraged women playwrights. Additionally, because seventeenth- and eighteenth-century British society considered women to be socially and intellectually inferior to men, the gender divide between theatre performers, playwrights, and even the occasional female theatre manager resulted in women receiving lower wages than men

for similar theatre-related functions. Of course as actresses emerged as celebrities, drawing crowds in their own rights and forcing theatre managers to recognize their monetary value, wage inequality began to diminish.

At the same time that actresses grappled with establishing their legitimacy onstage, women playwrights struggled with public acceptance. Even successful women playwrights like Aphra Behn and Susanna Centlivre who publicly acknowledged their published work asked for the public's forgiveness for any faults or offenses that might exist in their writing because they were women. Whether these women believed they were intellectually, managerially or physically inferior to men or not, these Restoration performers, managers and playwrights knew that in order to survive and thrive, they needed to bend a knee to ensure paternalistic support. Without that male support, their survival was much less certain. While the form of paternalism over theatre women established in 1660 certainly enabled women to succeed as legitimate performers, writers, and even theatre managers, patriarchy continued to dominate women's performances, writings and audience perceptions of these theatre women for almost one hundred and fifty years.

### **Scholarship on Women Playwrights 1660-1750**

Many studies of women authors before 1750 include discussions on the social and cultural upheavals taking place within. In response to ongoing social, cultural and religious upheavals taking place in England women began writing during the English Civil War and the Counter Reformation. Elaine Hobby's *Virtue of Necessity: English Women's Writing 1649-1688* suggests that women authors emerged because censorship broke down by 1640, allowing women greater access to print and suggesting that at this time women's religious writings emerged more forcefully.<sup>56</sup> Adding to Hobby's assertions, I would suggest that the emergence of published women by 1640 allowed the public to accept women as competent authors and eventually provided a solid base of legitimacy for women playwrights after 1660.

Gerda Lerner's work, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness: From the Middle Ages to Eighteen-Seventy* provides detailed scholarship on women's struggles to emancipate their ideas and beliefs under the rule of Britain's patriarchal society.<sup>57</sup> I would argue that it was difficult for women involved with theatre to separate themselves from the assistance or control men asserted over their performances, writings and theatre work. But like Lerner, I agree that these women eventually learned how to work within the strictures of the male-dominated theatre world in order to reflect a socially aware and thoughtfully defined and defining female consciousness. While actresses competed with men onstage, they did possess something that gave them the edge in competing with men for female roles and for male attention—they possessed the legitimate bodies and voices of women. Thus actresses did not threaten social norms in the same way that women playwrights (using their intellect) challenged social assumptions qualifying women as intellectually inferior to men. Because women playwrights instructed performers, commented on social and political events, controlled the actions and the words of performers, their participation in theatre threatened British social normativity more than the participation of actresses onstage, since actresses merely borrowed words while playwrights controlled them.

According to Lerner, female consciousness during the Restoration was both socially aware and believed that change for women was possible. Lerner's understanding of consciousness includes an awareness that women were not part of a dominant group, that they recognized the wrongs they suffered were not natural, and that an important bond existed between women.<sup>58</sup> I argue that the physical idea of change appeared first when women appeared onstage dressed in the clothes of various classes and genders, and was further enforced when these actresses became the mistresses and wives of kings and the aristocracy, allowing the British public to envision the possibility of social (gendered) change. Women playwrights eventually began to recognize that once they established themselves as successful authors, they, too, could challenge social restrictions and perhaps even suggest ways in which women's roles ought to be

imagined. Lerner's understanding of this concept of female consciousness reflects attitudes in the plays produced by several women of the period. She suggests that within seventeenth-century women's plays emerged the gradual emancipation of women voices, including women playwrights who began to recognize and even define their own place in seventeenth and eighteenth-century British society, a concept that informs subsequent chapters in this work.

In looking at women writers during the Jacobean Era (1567-1625), Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, *Writing Women in Jacobean England*, argues that the majority of these women writers concerned themselves with the politics of gender.<sup>59</sup> Further, she believes that "they [women writers] contextualize each other and they interact with contemporary cultural forces and literary traditions."<sup>60</sup> Thus these women began to write a feminist thread that was carried over into the next decades, acting as a type of structure onto which subsequent women writers could shape their own works.<sup>61</sup> Joy Wiltenburg's study, *Disorderly Women and Female Power in the Street Literature of Early Modern England and Germany* (1992), also suggests that women writers responded to their environment and that their responses are reflected in their works. Wiltenburg argues that theatre women's public engagement resulted in misogynistic responses in pamphlets, broadsides and poetry that were publicly scattered about in an effort to damage the reputation of these "public" women.<sup>62</sup> I suggest while women's performances were morally criticized since actresses were often equated as public women or prostitutes, they (and their performances) did not challenge men in the same way that women writers challenged men. Since the physical differences between men and women were easy to see onstage and the intellectual differences between men and women did not exist visually, in order to maintain the aura of male intellectual superiority, men (and women) continued to denigrate women's writings. It was in response to these feelings of repression and antagonism, according to Wiltenburg, that women began writing and publishing under their own names in an attempt to change the place of women in British society. Yet, I argue that women did not become playwrights simply because they wished to

change their world, rather they became playwrights because doing so afforded them opportunities for monetary success, social recognition, intellectual engagement, and even independence. Playwrights, male and female, did not have to undergo the daily rigors of performing or traveling and a successful play could earn a playwright a reasonable if not significant income from additional performances and publications. Whether they wrote about realism, political conversations, conservative encounters between the sexes, or simply crafted sexual repartees, playwrights wrote what audiences demanded. To do otherwise was to risk failure both economically and professionally. Moral, political or social commentary might be introduced in a subtle manner by playwrights who had attained some level of success but even so, many women playwrights chose not to (or were told not to) publish or present socially or politically contentious plays as examples from eighteenth-century women's plays presented in subsequent chapters will suggest.

In a recent collection of essays, *Early Modern Englishwomen Testing Ideas* (2011), editors Jo Wallwork and Paul Saltzman bring together scholarship that suggests how Early Modern women from a variety of backgrounds (including scientists, scholars, and politicians) publicly challenged male intellectuals.<sup>63</sup> Playwright, scientist and English aristocrat Margaret Cavendish (1623-1673), for example, sat in on Royal Society meetings because she was interested in natural science and, because of her connections she was allowed to quietly participate in these discussions. Alexandra Bennett, specifically addressing Cavendish's plays, argues that Cavendish understood her plays were a public genre that could inform and thus she used them actively as learning tools rather than simply presented them as entertainments. Cavendish, I suggest, clearly recognized that plays as a genre and as a form of entertainment, received wide public attention and would thus be the most facile way to reach a large number of people quickly. People attended performances, discussed performances they had attended, read

published plays in public in coffee houses and in private homes, wrote editorials on plays, read reviews, and published plays traveled easily from place to place.

In the same collection of essays, David McInnis shows how women incorporated new discoveries and cultural advancements into their work, providing a woman's-eye-view of seventeenth-century British culture. McInnis examines Aphra Behn's play, *The Widow Ranter; or, The History of Bacon in Virginia*, performed at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane on November 20, 1689, and suggests that Behn not only offered a reference to Virginia and the New World, but also attempted to present as realistic a portrayal of Virginia as she could. Sara Heller Mendelson's *The Mental World of Stuart Women* (1988) revisits Cavendish and Behn's work, and also the idea that Cavendish and Behn crafted perceptive plays that challenged British society and used theatre as a medium to express their (female if not feminist) ideas. Certainly as women writers became more published and their plays more widely produced, the idea of the professional woman writer emerged as a real possibility in Britain. Cheryl Turner examines the growth of women's professionalism as writers in *Living by the Pen* (1992) and finds that although their emergence on the public scene as professional writers was neither easy nor uncontested, women did write and they did publish—increasingly adding their names to their works as the idea of professional women writers grew.<sup>64</sup>

In *Early Modern Women's Writing: An Anthology 1560-1700*, Paul Salzman collects writings from a dozen Early Modern women including Behn. Salzman argues that Behn should be considered the first professional woman writer of note. Salzman understands that many of these late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century writers came from aristocratic backgrounds, but he suggests that during the English Civil War women from less privileged backgrounds began producing published works. The publications these women produced Salzman argues, were highly influenced by the societal changes taking place in England, including a civil war, the adoption of a commonwealth, a reformation and counter reformation, a protectorate, contentious

religious engagements, and a fairly rapid exchange of monarchs leading up to George I that included Charles II, James II, William and Mary, Anne and finally the Hanoverian George. By the end of the seventeenth century, women were producing more secular literature, and they were writing in a wide variety of genres, including drama. They were also increasingly from the “middling” classes and often wrote about courtship, family or domestic situations. Salzman includes in his anthology the plays of three women, loosely associating them as plays of sexual politics: *Love’s Victory* (c. 1620) by Mary Wroth, a play he claims was circulated in manuscript and was not intended for public display, *Bell in Campo* (1662) by Margaret Cavendish, whose grand collection of plays meant to impress, and *The City Heiress* (1682) by Aphra Behn, whom Salzman declares was “in complete control of her medium.”<sup>65</sup>

While Behn certainly seems to be in control of her work, women playwrights who wrote during the Restoration era, as she did, risked both their professional and personal reputations. According to W. R. Owens, “Behn had been condemned in the company with other Restoration dramatists, and more specifically as a woman.”<sup>66</sup> In addition, Owens acknowledges the enormous responsibility women took on when they chose to write professionally for theatre during the Restoration era, claiming,

It is almost impossible to over-emphasize just how momentous a decision it was for a woman in the seventeenth century to enter the fiercely competitive arena of the professional theatre and to write for the public. Nothing could have flouted more openly the prevailing ideology about the role of women in society, based as it was on the assumption that women were inferior to men in every respect.<sup>67</sup>

Living in England during a period when women were defined by their marital status rather than by their occupations, choosing the public occupation as playwright (especially in light of the reputation of Restoration plays being sexually frank, profane and irreverent) placed a woman’s occupation front and center rather than her marital or sexual status. Behn received constant and consistent accolades for her plays, perhaps because she identified well with the sexual and social liberality allowed on Restoration stages.<sup>68</sup> The prologue for Behn’s *The Rover*, for example,

acknowledged the pleasurable sensation Restoration plays provided audiences, “New Plays are stuff’d with Wits, and with Debauches, / That croud and sweat like Cits in May-day Coaches.”<sup>69</sup>

Behn further challenged social expectations of Restoration women as *The Rover* opens with a discussion between Florinda and Hellena (Florinda’s sister, destined for the Nunnery) who discuss the frustrations of being a women in Restoration society. Florinda asks her Nunnery-bound sister who is prodding her about her amours; “What an impertinent thing is a young Girl bred in a Nunnery! How full of Questions!”<sup>70</sup> While at the same time (sexually curious soon-to-be-nun) Hellena pushes to identify Florinda’s lover, causing her sister to blush. Pressed, Florinda acknowledges she blushes “With Indignation; and how near soever my Father thinks I am to marrying that hated Object, I shall let him see I understand better what’s due to my Beauty, Birth and Fortune, and more to my Soul, than to obey those unjust Commands.”<sup>71</sup> Behn presented the idea that a woman’s soul deserved better treatment than simply being assessed by a suitor for her beauty, social status and dowry, a belief reflected when Hellena remarks, proud of her sister’s defiance, “Now hang me, if I don’t love thee for that dear Disobedience. I love Mischief strangely, as most of our Sex do, who are come to love nothing else...”<sup>72</sup> Behn’s own acknowledged love of “Mischief” in the face of loving “nothing else” bring to light why her work resonated with Restoration audiences and why Behn’s plays succeeded, though she also challenged social norms, defended women’s “souls” as superior to their beauty, social status or monetary value as a bride. Unapologetically, *The Rover* highlights women’s issues, and allows women to question their sexual desires in such a public manner or for challenging their filial responsibilities as good daughters. By placing her female characters within the sexually charged atmosphere of *Carnival*, Behn allowed them to choose their sexual partners rather than being selected by male partners, and even though each of her three female characters end up confined by conventional social roles as nun, wife and prostitute, the potential for social change for women exists.

Susanna Centlivre modeled many of her plays on those of Behn when she began writing for theatre in 1700. While Behn wrote solidly within Restoration drama, scholars consider Susanna Centlivre to be a transitional playwright, and she wrote during a period that saw significant changes in British social and royal structure. Centlivre's first play, *The Perjur'd Husband; or, The Adventures of Venice* (1700), a tragi-comedy with a sexually explicit sub-plot perhaps best represents this transitional period between Restoration theatre and eighteenth-century theatre. *The Perjur'd Husband* presents the social constraints women (and men) experienced in England by the end of the seventeenth century, and Centlivre places her play in the topsy-turvy world of the Venice *Carnival* just like Behn's play *The Rover*. Centlivre as a playwright known for comedies of manners, often explored themes of marital freedom, a topic less explored by Behn. While like Behn's earlier play, *The Perjur'd Husband* attempts to give women agency in choosing their sexual partners, it also ends as a tragedy replete with duplicity and the deaths of multiple characters, including the two leading female characters, Placentia and Aurelia.<sup>73</sup> Centlivre sacrifices her sexually liberal female characters and labels them as morally duplicitous in order to suggest that the patriarchal society (represented by the innocent Alonzo) that established the rules of gender norms and the manner in which women should behave, were, in fact right all along. Thus, while Behn gave her female characters license to seek out sexual partners, Centlivre's play reflects the restrictions placed on women in the presence of an increasingly conservative court. Centlivre herself suggested that women were stronger when they did not fight as her Prologue to *The Perjur'd Husband* suggests, "Whate'er's her Fate, she's sure to gain the Field, / For Women always conquer, when they yield."<sup>74</sup> Perhaps Centlivre conquered the London stage by first recognizing social expectations and then by suppressing her own beliefs in the equality of the genders.

Centlivre's plays at first appear to belong to the genre of sentimental comedy, though she presents a much more nuanced and introspective examination of society. Her experiences as both

an actress and playwright occurred during a period of significant changes in the rule of England, which likely influenced her work.<sup>75</sup> Victoria Warren, in her essay, “Gender and Genre in Susanna Centlivre’s, ‘The Gamester’ and ‘The Basset Table,’” suggests that labeling of Centlivre’s plays as sentimental comedy is “Inadequate, inaccurate, and a distortion of the plays themselves.”<sup>76</sup> Indeed classifying the plays of women playwrights into particular cubby holes limits both the plays and the women playwrights who produced them. As a wife and a working woman, Centlivre consistently presented in her own actions how a woman might perform publicly just as she wrote some of these opportunities in her social comedies that suggested a variety ways in which women might experience marital freedom while adhering to early eighteenth-century England’s social expectations.

### **Actresses and the Invention of Celebrity**

By bringing women into professional theatre, Charles II provided common women with the opportunity to gain fame and fortune, raise their social status, influence the way in which British society imagined women and become national celebrities. Yet in spite of becoming celebrated, they also had to accept paternalistic assistance in order to legitimize their position as theatre professionals, and accept their own public objectification and admission of their intellectual inferiority to men. These actresses, so publicly displayed as performers and mistresses, proved to the public that anything was possible. Who better to admire than these women who were beautiful, witty, provocative, beguiling, clever, funny and captivating? Nell Gwyn, of course, was one of the most recognizable actresses in the Restoration theatre, and even though she started in theatre as an orange girl selling fruit and sweets and running messages to performers backstage at the Drury Lane Theatre, and even though her career onstage lasted only a handful of years, she drew the admiration of playwrights like Aphra Behn, gained the admiration

and attention of London's public, became mistress to several important gentlemen, and captivated the king.

In 1663, actresses in Thomas Killigrew's King's Company included at least ten women: Anne Carey, Anne and Rebecca Marshall, Mary Knepp (or Knapp), Mary Lee (nee Aldridge, married to actor John Lee around 1670), Elizabeth Cox (who remained with the King's Company from 1671-1682), Mrs. Griffin, Elizabeth Boutell, Eleanor or Nell Gwyn, and Margaret Hughes.<sup>77</sup> It was at Killigrew's theatre that Samuel Pepys recorded seeing a woman act in January 1660/61, when he went to see a production of *The Beggars' Bush* (1647), remarking, "after that to the Theatre [Theatre Royal Vere Street], where was acted *Beggars' Bush*, it being very well done; and here the first time that ever I saw women come upon the stage."<sup>78</sup> Reinforcing what I suggested earlier that theatre managers saw women as a way to regain public interest in theatre after almost two decades absence, in 1664, Killigrew staged an all-female performance of his own play, *The Parson's Wedding*, capitalizing on this new actress phenomenon. In 1672 Killigrew's King's Company creatively and consciously repeated this single-sex casting and cast John Dryden's *Secret Love; or The Maiden Queene* (first performed 1667, published 1688) entirely with women.<sup>79</sup> While both Killigrew's and Dryden's plays were written by men and produced by men, women controlled the performance. Apparently, Killigrew learned quickly that audiences would pay good money to witness such novel performances.

### **Nell Gwyn and the Cultivation of Celebrity**

Actresses used their physical stage appeal, dressing in fancy clothes and speaking cheeky lines, in order to attract the attentions of gentlemen well above their own social class. Actress Eleanor "Nell" Gwyn (Gwynn or Gwynne, 1650-1687), raised herself from a London brothel to become the mistress of many rich suitors, including and King Charles II and Charles Sackville, 6<sup>th</sup> Earl of Dorset (also known as Lord Bruckhurst, 1638-1706).<sup>80</sup> Nell's mother, "Old Ma

Gwynn” (and also named Nell Gwyn, née Smith), ran a brothel in Covent Garden while the theatres were shuttered. It was there that Nell as a child served alcohol to clients or may have later worked as a prostitute. She had a younger sister named Rose, who also became an orange girl at the Drury Lane Theatre, and her father died in debtor’s prison, suggesting that these women had to fend for themselves. When Nell was about ten years old the London theatres reopened. Three years later, a family friend, Mary Meggs, also known as “Orange Moll” inducted Nell into the orange girl profession and Nell began selling China oranges and sweetmeats in the Theatre Royal Drury Lane, supplementing her income while also running notes between male admirers (punters) and some of those first actresses backstage. For an extra penny “punters” could watch actresses (many of whom had been prostitutes) change their costumes backstage. Nell was pretty, funny, witty and garnered the attentions of men in the audience, showing her face and her body to the appreciative and often rowdy crowds. Dressed provocatively as required, Nell served clients a variety of sweets and treats at London’s most significant theatre, the Theatre Royal Drury Lane.<sup>81</sup>

Nell was not shy and engaged in witty repartee with both audience and performers and soon became a favorite with the actors and actresses as she passed notes back and forth. She caught the eye of the actor Charles Hart, who became Nell’s lover and who taught her to perform. Seeing an opportunity to become an actress herself, Nell joined the King’s Company before she was fifteen years old, where she excelled in comedic roles. When the King’s Company relocated to Oxford to perform during London’s Great Plague (July 1665-October 1666), Nell went with them, performing both onstage and off as the mistress of the company’s lead actor, Charles Hart. At the beginning of her career, Nell was illiterate and could neither read nor write; she memorized her lines as they were read to her and various actor “tutors” (and subsequent lovers) helped prepare her for her roles.<sup>82</sup> These early actresses were often exposed to voyeuristic audiences wishing to see women’s bodies and so playwrights wrote rape scenes where clothing

was literally torn off onstage and where actresses cross-dressed in tightly-fitting breeches, eventually “revealed” to be female by exposing their breasts onstage.

Charles II became enamored of Nell after seeing her perform in the role of Florizel in the premier performance of John Dryden’s *Secret Love; or, The Maiden Queene* (1667).<sup>83</sup> The role of Florizel was a “breeches” role, requiring Nell to perform as a young man as well as a young woman. Certainly Dryden’s creation of Florizel, the mad young cross-dressing woman was certain to showcase Nell’s charm and wit, not to mention her body. Pepys wrote of Nell’s 2 March 1667 performance,

there is a comical part done by Nell, which is Florimell, that I never can hope ever to see the like done again, by man or woman. The King and Duke of York were at the play. But so great performance of a comical part was never, I believe, in the world before as Nell do this both as a mad girle, then most and best of all when she comes in like a young gallant; and hath the notions and carriage of a spark the most that ever I saw any man have. It makes me, I confess, admire her...<sup>84</sup>

This role gained her the king’s attention and affection. By 1667, (at the age of 19 or 20) Nell became the king’s mistress.<sup>85</sup>

The relationship between Charles and Nell soon became public, and this, along with her own dramatic personality, propelled Gwyn into an engaging cultural icon.<sup>86</sup> The king built a secret passage from his court rooms in Westminster to her house in Pall Mall (that he provided her with) so that they could enjoy private trysts over a game of cards. Unlike Barbara Castlemaine, another of Charles’ mistresses, Nell never made any attempt to interfere with politics nor did she ever ask for or expect any title her herself, though she did for their two sons. Once, a crowd attacked a carriage thinking that Louise de Keroualle (another of Charles’ mistresses publicly derided as the “Catholic whore”) was inside, but Nell popped out instead and (reportedly) announced, “Hold, good people. I am the Protestant whore.” Nell remained in the king’s favor and upon his death, tradition has it that Charles II told his brother, James, “Let not

poor Nelly starve.” James, true to his word, paid of Nell’s debts and gave her a pension of £1500 a year.

Audiences came to the theatre to verify what they had heard about the celebrated pretty and talented comedienne, Gwyn. Charles II often attended her performances and audiences themselves became part of this public performance translated variously from playwright to actress, from actress to lover, and from lovers to audience members, a transformative experience of theatre performance to real life.<sup>87</sup> In spite of her success and ultimate fame as an actress, Gwyn retired early from the stage in 1671 around age twenty-one, having given birth to Charles Beauclerk (1670-1726), the first of her sons by Charles II. She never returned to the stage in spite of her continued public popularity and celebrity stature although having ascended to mistress of the king, she no longer needed to act professionally to gain the public’s attention. Nell was appointed a Lady of the Privy Chamber to the Queen, solidifying further her social rise and redefining British social class structure.<sup>88</sup>

In response to Gwyn’s rapid ascension as a popular culture icon, some of the leading artists of the period painted her portrait.<sup>89</sup> Portraiture of actors or actresses became popular in the late seventeenth century, and was likely a result of recent improvements in printing and paper making that reduced the cost to the public of such portrait prints or publications, including plays.<sup>90</sup> Other artists in turn copied these portraits and made them into prints that sold in shops and on the streets to anyone interested in purchasing such celebrity commodities.<sup>91</sup> These images showcased the latest fashions and eventually became the standard of what society idealized as beauty.<sup>92</sup> Laura Engel argues that “fashioning celebrity depended on narratives of desirable and acceptable femininity...[and] Actresses’ portraits, memoirs, and theatrical roles helped to reinforce these narratives.”<sup>93</sup> Although Engel and historian Leo Braudy both argue that the concept of the celebrity originated in the eighteenth century, I would argue that celebrity status was firmly established with the appearance of actresses whom the public admired and adored.<sup>94</sup>

They literally and figuratively became London's new royalty. With beauty, wit, and confidence actresses quickly gained the public's attention and became celebrities because of their public performances and as London's new demi-royalty, whose hybridity both challenged social norms and broke down social barriers while providing the public with some pretty intriguing drama onstage and off.

The idea of "celebrity" was certainly not new however, and during the Restoration common women—literally women from the streets—somehow convinced a large portion of the population in Britain to value them as cultural icons; their appearance onstage coincided with the formation of a celebrity culture in Britain that, from 1660 onward, never seems to have diminished. The idea of celebrity and celebrity culture was also exported eventually to America but would not take hold there until the middle of the eighteenth century. Whether they were performing onstage for a paying audience or engaging in private social intrigues offstage, late seventeenth-century actresses experienced an elevated public interest in most aspects of their lives, suggesting that these women were indeed among the world's first celebrities.<sup>95</sup> The seventeenth century had seen the beheading of Charles I, the repression of culture under the highly conservative Cromwell government, the return of theatre under a licentious Charles II, a contested rule under Catholic James II, and a return of the crown to James II's Protestant daughter Mary and her Dutch husband William. Such volatility amongst the aristocracy gave the public pause in their adoration. In many ways the appeal of these actresses was that they were "common," which made them accessible, admirable.



Fig. 2.1. Anne Bracegirdle in John Dryden's *The Indian Queen* wearing a Surinam headdress said to belong to Aphra Behn (ca. 1654).

Nell Gwyn was certainly not the only celebrity actress but she was particularly good at capturing public attention. In fact, Gwyn was not noted so much for her brilliant performances as for her charismatic character onstage and off. Her off-stage sexual dalliances increased her notoriety and even then heightened her celebrity status just as it seems to do today. But she also performed alongside plenty of capable and talented women. The growing interest in the personal lives of performers, particularly of actresses, allowed audiences to live their lives voyeuristically. When the public attended the theatre, where the lines between fantasy and reality were blurred, audiences could even participate in the live action that went on between actresses and their lovers in the audience. Actresses from the lower classes wore gowns from the aristocracy, blurring the rigid English class-based society. Restoration actresses married their aristocratic lovers and became titled ladies, completely shattering notions of the permanence of the English social class structure. For good or ill, early Restoration and actresses like Nell Gwyn, transformed the face of Anglophone theatre and challenged social, cultural and even political conceptions of how the public viewed women.

### **“Women in Conflict” Plays and “She-Tragedy”: The Changing Face of Restoration Theatre**

Playwrights looking to capitalize on the novelty and rising popularity of Restoration actresses began to write plays that specifically focused on women in principal roles. Two new styles of plays that emerged during the last decades of the seventeenth century were “women in conflict” plays and “she-tragedy.” “Women in conflict” plays juxtaposed the virtuous heroine alongside her darker antagonist.<sup>96</sup> “She-tragedies” made even better use of actresses and replaced male leads with two female leads, the ingénue and the villainess. The King’s Company was the first acting group to take advantage of “women in conflict” plays. Rebecca or “Beck” Marshall (fl. 1663-1677),<sup>97</sup> as Pepys referred to her, and Elizabeth Boutell (or Bowtel, nee Ridley, fl. 1650-1715), formed a successful acting partnership in the King’s Company and were the first duo to

work in the “women in conflict” style. Marshall and Boutell first appeared together in 1670 in William Joyner’s tragedy, *The Roman Empress* and then again in John Dryden’s two-part tragedy, *Conquest of Granada* (1670).<sup>98</sup> In 1672, Marshall took part in at least two all-female productions produced for the King’s Company, including a revival of Killigrew’s own bawdy comedy, *The Parson’s Wedding* (c. 1640) (which he had as previously mentioned staged with an all-female cast in 1664), and Francis Beaumont’s and John Fletcher’s play *Philaster, or Love Lies a-Bleeding* (c. 1611). In each of these productions, Marshall played the villainess, while Boutell countered as the ingénue.<sup>99</sup> In 1674, the two actresses performed together again in Nathaniel Lee’s *The Tragedy of Nero, Emperour of Rome* and in 1677 they appeared together in John Crowne’s *The Destruction of Jerusalem*. The two actresses continued to work alongside each other for several years until Rebecca Marshall joined the Duke’s Company in 1676, a year her death in 1677.<sup>100</sup>

Taking advantage of Marshall’s popularity in the “women in conflict” plays once she transferred over to the Duke’s Company, she was cast alongside their popular principal actress, Elizabeth Barry (1658-1713) in Thomas d’Urfey’s comedy, *The Fond Husband, or the Plotting Sisters* (1677).<sup>101</sup> After the death of Marshall in 1677, the Duke’s Company continued to pair their own popular actresses in similar “women in conflict” productions. Mary Saunderson Betterton (1637-1712) and Mary Lee formed one such grouping, while Elizabeth Barry and Anne Bracegirdle formed another. The fact that both the King’s Company and the Duke’s Company continued to produce these particular female-lead productions suggests that women had come into their own as performers and that the public was interested and willing to pay to see how women dealt with social conflict.

Both the King’s Company and its rival, the Duke’s Company employed equally talented actresses. Elizabeth Barry (1658-1713) began her career in 1675 with the Duke’s Company and she continued acting under the United Company (1682-1695) after social and political conflicts

threatened to derail Anglophone theatre once again, and forced the two rival companies to join forces.<sup>102</sup> In this early period before actresses began to specialize in certain roles, Barry performed successfully as both a comedienne and tragedienne.<sup>103</sup> Her successes onstage led to the growth in popularity of women acting, particularly in tragic roles, and especially in the newly created genre known as “she-tragedy,” a term coined in 1714 by Nicolas Rowe (1674-1718), who capitalized on the popularity of actresses at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

As with the “women in conflict” plays, “she-tragedies” were written to create specific roles for actresses whose reputations helped to ensure a play’s success. “She-tragedy,” also known as pathetic tragedy, remained popular in Anglophone theatre through the middle of the eighteenth century. Rowe, one of the most popular playwrights to utilize actresses so successfully, wrote three highly popular tragedies that saw continued production through the eighteenth century: *The Fair Penitent* (1703)—a play based largely on a 1632 production by Philip Massinger and Nathan Field, *The Fatal Dowry*—followed by *The Tragedy of Jane Shore* (1714) and *The Tragedy of Lady Jane Grey* (1715).<sup>104</sup> Playwrights Thomas Otway and Thomas Southerne also saw the advantage of showcasing actresses and working in conjunction with Barry’s talents, created tragic roles for her, which ultimately led to Barry’s popularity and her title (reinforcing the idea of actresses as celebrities) of the “Famous Mrs. Barry.”<sup>105</sup>

The popularity of women becoming performing in roles as tragic heroines at this particular moment may have been due partly to political timing—audiences disenfranchised with masculine leaders or the popularity of Queen Mary II, who ruled alone in the 1690s while her husband William III visited the Continent—or due to the improved talents of these new actresses. With the advent of talented actresses coming to the stage, particularly women whose talents and popularity almost exceeded those exhibited by their male counterparts, playwrights took note and created roles for these new influential and powerful performers.<sup>106</sup> Not only did the face of theatre

change with women taking the stage, plays themselves changed as the age of the heroine had begun.

### **Betty Mackerel: Levels of Celebrity**

While a significant number of women went on to become celebrated performers, not all actresses rose to fame, though most of these women disappeared into obscurity. However, the very nature of acting being so public, a few unpopular actresses were remembered not for their grace, beauty, or wit, but because of their offish performances, rude gestures, and questionable morality. One such actress was a woman whom we know only as Betty or “Bess” Mackerel. On November 19, 1674, Betty or “Bess” Mackerel made her first stage appearance at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane, in the premier of Thomas Duffet’s (fl. 1673-1676) Restoration parody, *The Mock Tempest, or the Enchanted Castle*.<sup>107</sup> Rumored to be impudent and lewd, coarse and vulgar, handsome and large, Betty likely commanded a memorable onstage presence. We know that she was a large woman and quite likely hard-working as John Milton’s nephew, John Phillips (1631-1706), curiously described Betty as “the Gyantess Betty-Mackerela, who...was one of the most diligent women of her time.”<sup>108</sup> Criticized by Robert Gould, author of the misogynistic work *Love Given O’er: or, a Satyr against the Pride, Lust, and Inconstancy, &c. of Woman* in 1690, and *Satyr on the Play House*, Betty was mocked for her experiences “in the pit” of the theatre alluding to her reputation as a prostitute. Gould saw her as boorish, impudent, and lusty. Writing in 1685, Gould cheekily remarked:

hot at repartee with Orange Betty,  
Who tho not blest with halfe a grain of sense,  
To leaven her whole lump of impudence,  
Aided with that she allways is too hard  
For the vain things & bests them from their guard.”<sup>109</sup>

While Betty Mackerel may not have excelled in histrionics, at least not in the kind that were presented publicly in theatres onstage, acting did allow her to elevate her social standing as she became mistress to Sir Thomas Armstrong (1624-1684).<sup>110</sup> Betty's infamy, enlarged both because of her physical stature and her sexual reputation, propelled her into a temporary celebrity status, which in turn aroused the animosity of several critics, including Lord George de Forest who immortalized Betty in his poem "To Mr. Julian," (1677), "May Betty Mackrel cease to be a Whore."<sup>111</sup> Betty serves as an example of how even some of the lowest and least respected actresses took advantage of negative criticism and gossip to ensure financial stability and improve their place in society, and through Betty Mackerel we see just how much theatre changed the lives of some women economically and socially and challenged the very foundation of British social class structure.

### **Playwrighting and Gender Struggles**

Even though Charles II's patent benefitted women writers and allowed women the opportunity to make their living as professional playwrights, the world of playwriting was fiercely competitive.<sup>112</sup> The first known professional British woman playwrights, Jane Lumley (1537-1578) and Mary Sidney Herbert (1561-1621) with their translations of plays into English actually pre-date Charles II's return to England in 1660. And Elizabeth Cary (née Tanfield, 1585-1639) was likely the first known Anglophone woman playwright to write an original play, *The tragedie of Miriam, the faerie queene of Jewry* (1613), while Margaret Cavendish (1623-1673), who wrote at least twenty-six plays published between 1662 and 1677, published her works under her own name at a time when most women authors often chose to remain anonymous.<sup>113</sup> While Cavendish's plays remained popular during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the plays of Aphra Behn (who published at least fifteen plays between 1670 and 1687), that stand out as

significant for this study not only for their themes and tone, but also because Behn's work and her tenacity as a woman author influenced later generations of women playwrights.

### **The Rise of Women Playwrights: Aphra Behn**

Aphra Behn (nee Johnson, baptized 1640-1689) is among the most important female playwrights Britain ever produced.<sup>114</sup> Popular, unpredictable, and having lived a rich and varied life transatlantically, Behn was also criticized for being an outspoken woman. Contemporary poet and satirist Robert Gould (1660-1708/09), mockingly called Behn "chaste Sappho" and derided her Royalist play *The City Heiress* (1682) as morally unchaste, commenting, "The City Heiress, by chaste Sappho Writ: / Where the Lewd Widow comes, with brazen Face, / Just reeking from a Stallion's rank Embrace / T'acquaint the Audience with her Filthy Case."<sup>115</sup> And although Behn published and produced her work under her own name, she also reminds us of the complicated place women held as female authors during the Restoration era.

While most Restoration plays contained frank sexuality, Behn mixed sex with politics. Behn's plays made no effort to apologize for her character's sexual awareness or sexual choices, nor did she apologize for the confidence with which her female characters sought out mates. Knowing that her work received criticism for being the work of a woman, Behn addressed the public's concerns of her authority and respectability in the Preface



Fig. 2.2. *Aphra Behn*, by Mary Beale. Oil on Panel, 25 cm x 19.6 cm. Collection of St. Hilda's College, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK.

for her published edition of *The Lucky Chance; or, The Alderman's Bargains* (1686). In her Preface, Behn claimed carefully chose to write a play that did not offend and was particularly addressed to her female audience;

Ladies, for its further Justification to you, be pleas'd to know, that the first Copy of this Play was read by several Ladys of very great Quality, and unquestioned Fame, and received their most favourable Opinion, not one charging it with the Crime, that some have been pleas'd to find in the Acting. Other Ladys who saw it more than once, whose Quality and Vertue can sufficiently justifie any thing they design to favour, were pleas'd to say, they found an Entertainment in it very far from scandalous; and for the Generality of the Town, I found by my Receipts it was not thought so Criminal. <sup>116</sup>

Behn also identified her desire for fame in in a masculine sense of empowerment and strength as “hero” rather than as “heroine”;

All I ask, is the Priviledge for my Masculine Part the Poet in me...to tread in those successful Paths my Predecessors have so long thriv'd in...If I must now, because of my Sex, have this Freedom, but that you will usurp all to your selves; I lay down my Quill, and you shall hear no more of me, no not so much as to make Comparisons, because I will be kinder to my Brothers of the Pen, than they have been to a defenceless Woman; for I am not content to write for a Third Day only. I value Fame as much as if I had been born a *Hero*; and if you rob me of that, I can retire from the ungrateful World, and scorn its fickle Favours. <sup>117</sup>

Understanding her position as a woman and accepting that her gender made her more vulnerable to criticism both for writing plays of writing that challenged social morality and for being an outspoken female, Behn also admitted that she desired fame before money or before public accolades, thus publicly acknowledging her desire to be a celebrated alongside the period's most popular female performers. Writing, “as if [she] had been born a *Hero*” and recognized for her “Masculine Part” (the rather phallic reference cannot be ignored especially in light of the types of plays she wrote) rather than monetary recompense for writing as a “defenceless Woman,” Behn eventually achieved fame during her lifetime as a successful woman playwright and novelist, though she remained highly controversial.

Behn's own life experiences make her an engaging character worthy of any stage. Although her own family was not wealthy, Behn's mother was nurse to the wealthy and

influential Culpeper family of botanist Nicholas Culpeper in Sussex. Behn often interacted with the children and it is likely here that she learned to read and write.<sup>118</sup> When Behn was about twenty-three years old (c. 1663), she traveled to Suriname, which was that time an English colony, but would be captured by the Dutch in 1667. Soon after she returned to England in 1664, Aphra Behn married a Dutch merchant, Johan Behn, although he died shortly after they married, forcing Behn, a young widow with debts, to earn her own living. While in Suriname, Behn had met an African slave trader who later inspired her short novel, *Oroonoko; or, The Royal Slave* (1688). *Oroonoko* brought the horrors of slave trading to the British conscience and it was so popular that playwright Thomas Southerne transcribed Behn's novel into a play of the same name (staged 1695, published 1696).<sup>119</sup>

Using her "Masculine Part," Behn published her controversial works unapologetically. Between 1670 and her death in 1689 Behn wrote and produced at least fifteen plays. A devout Tory, Behn believed in the divine right of Charles II to rule Britain.<sup>120</sup> Her views on the ultimate power of kings appear in her comedy, *The Rover* (1677), and in her novel, *Oroonoko*. *The Rover* is considered to be Behn's best dramatic work.<sup>121</sup> In addition, Behn's Catholic sympathies emerge in her comedy, *The Feign'd Curtizans* (1679), set during the time of the Popish Plot. *The Feign'd Curtizans* also presents Behn's views on women and slavery; "Faith, Madam, you mistake my Constitution, my Beauty and my Business is only to be belov'd not to love; I leave that Slavery for you Women of Quality, who must invite, or die without Blessing...all my Lovers of the noble kind throng to adore and fill my Presence daily, gay as if each were triumphing for Victory."<sup>122</sup> It becomes apparent in her plays that women are not merely objects to be adored. Instead, Behn equates such objectification of women to slavery, women can actively love for themselves. Behn's Catholic sympathies also arise in the dedication of *The Second Part of The Rover, or, The Banish'd Cavaliers* (1681) to Charles II's Catholic brother, James II, Duke of York.<sup>123</sup> And her play, *The Roundheads, or The Good Old Cause* (1682), a political work produced at the Duke of

York's Theatre, was produced at a moment of social unrest in Britain when the king and Parliament were in conflict.<sup>124</sup> The enduring complexity of Behn's work is later echoed by Anglophone women playwrights of the eighteenth century, including Susanna Centlivre, Hannah Cowley, Elizabeth Inchbald and American authors, Mercy Otis Warren and Susanna Rowson, whose works were a result of their responses to events surrounding the American Revolution.

Fame for women in theatre was palpable and the idea of being celebrated or becoming a celebrity was on the minds of many women. Claiming a desire for fame herself, Behn also recognized the importance of fame and the power of sisterhood in doing so. She helped promote celebrity status for period actresses including Nell Gwyn, whom Behn adored and whom she outlived by two years, and dedicated her comedy, *The Feign'd Curtizans, or a Nights Intrigue, a Comedy* (1679) to Gwyn;<sup>125</sup>

Madam, you alone had the patent from heaven to ingross all hearts; and even those distant slaves whom you conquer with your fame, pay an equall tribute to those that have the blessing to be wounded by your Eyes, and boast the happiness of beholding you dayly; insomuch that succeeding ages who shall with joy survey History shall Envy us who lived in this, and saw those charming wonders which they can only reade of, and whom we ought in charity to pity, since all the Pictures, pens or pencils can draw, will give give 'em [sic] but a faint Idea of what we have the honour to see in such absolute Perfection; they can only guess She was infinitely fair, witty, and deserving...

Invoking images of slavery and travel, Behn almost defines the idea of celebrity here in her admiration of Gwyn. Behn presents Gwyn with strength as a woman who can conquer and enslave her admirers, wound them with her glance, charm them with her presence, and pities the History that has yet to be since no image or description of Gwyn could ever capture her "Absolute perfection."<sup>126</sup> As a woman who knew that her works might grant her immortality, Behn finishes by looking projecting onto Gwyn what the future might say, "She *was* infinitely fair, witty, and deserving." Perhaps more than any comment in her dedication to Gwyn that stands out is the idea that Gwyn deserved her success, that she deserved her fame, that she fame was not a gift but a hard-earned right that women could share in alongside men. Behn, in spite of her claim in her dedication to Gwyn that an image could not capture one's spirit, perhaps understood

the importance of immortality regardless of fame's translation into the future and had her own portrait painted several times. Three portraits are extant, one believed to be by Mary Beale (1632-1699) (see Fig. 2.1), one by John Riley and one by Sir Peter Lely (see Fig. 2.2). The portrait by Beale, considered to be the first professional female British painter, was painted Behn when she was in her early thirties, about the time she began writing plays.<sup>127</sup>

It is not surprising that a playwright with Behn's experiences, a woman who had traveled transatlantically, who had worked as a spy for King Charles II, and who needed to support herself financially after her husband's death, would have ended up changing the face of English theatre. In addition to writing politically and socially provocative plays, Behn brought authenticity to the theatre by introducing real costumes from her travels to exotic lands. A feathered headdress from Suriname belonging to Behn was used for the production of John Dryden's *The Indian Queen* (1664) at the Drury Lane Theatre (the King's Theatre), which transformed the Indians into exotic characters whose physical appearance was now unmistakably different from the characters of the Spanish conquerors. Behn associated the feathered headdresses and body ornaments with strange cultural body piercings that the Natives engaged in when given needles.<sup>128</sup> Behn wrote,

we trade for feathers, which they order into all shapes, make themselves little short habits of 'em, and glorious wreaths for their heads, necks, arms and legs, and I gave 'em to the King's theater, and it was the dress of the Indian Queen infinitely admired by persons of quality, and were unimitable. Besides these, a thousand little knacks and rarities in nature, and some of their baskets, weapons, aprons et cetera. We dealt with 'e, with beads of all colors, knives, axes, pins and needles, which they used only as tools to drill holes with in their ears, noses, and lips, where they hang a great many little things.<sup>129</sup>

This level of authenticity allowed theatre to show Anglophone audiences the expanding British world in an exciting and engaging manner since most members of the audience would never travel to see such sights for themselves. Thus just as the British Empire was expanding, the world itself was contracting, becoming smaller, more realistic, easier to imagine.

While she helped to transform costuming in theatre, Behn also introduced the idea that women could have politically engaged discussions. Behn's play, *The Roundheads*, satirizes the

fall of the Long Parliament or Rump Parliament in England in 1659/60 after the death of Protectorate Richard Cromwell in April 1659, though her dramatic retelling is more fiction than fact, with the city of London rising against the Parliament and dissolving the Rump. Political drama in England during the late seventeenth century revealed a highly contentious and conflicted public even after the return of Charles II to the throne. Protestants were desperate not to have a Catholic monarch return, just as much as Tories wished to maintain the monarchy as a powerful head of state over the Parliament. Yet Behn understood that while theatre was a place to educate and inform, it was also a place to entertain and *The Roundheads* provided that delicate balance of enlightening and entertaining. Like many plays of the period, *The Roundheads* was based on the work of another. In this case Behn borrowed her plot from John Tatham's successful satire, *The Rump; or, The Mirror of the Late Times* (1660), a play produced in February 1660 at a private theatre on the eve of the Restoration and before theatre was officially allowed to be a public entertainment. While Behn based her play on Tatham's play, she provided a more genuine feeling to the satire, by giving her characters lively personalities, and by crafting a more memorable and entertaining production.<sup>130</sup>

Behn's contributions to theatre certainly added to the public airing of political strife and to onstage authenticity of the characters. But more importantly, as a woman writer, Behn helped legitimize the work of women in a public forum as an engaging, inspiring, entertaining, and intellectually confident author. Her works were political but they were also funny. Her characters were clever, but they were also realistic. Her plots aired sexual tensions and she challenged gender norms, yet she also realistically gave her female characters few options other than those available to them at the time as wives, spinsters, nuns, and prostitutes. Significantly, Behn did not apologize for her work in the same way that subsequent women playwrights found themselves having when confronted by the increasingly stringent conservative tone of theatre that emerged during the mid eighteenth century. Instead, in the creation of her characters, particularly her

female characters, as believable human beings, and in real and informative subjects she brought to the stage, Behn brought a level of authenticity to the theatre that echoed into the next century. Behn's world of the late seventeenth-century Restoration era allowed for greater moral laxity and dramatic ingenuity than it would in the following century. By the time Susanna Centlivre was producing plays in 1700, thirty years after the production of Behn's first play, Britain was already becoming much more conservative and this allowance for dramatic innovation had all but disappeared.

### **Susanna Centlivre and Sentimental Comedy**

Susanna Centlivre was born Susanna Freeman in either 1667 or 1670. She may have been raised in the small town of Holbeach, in Lincolnshire, England, though little is known about her early years. Her father fled to Ireland for his parliamentary political beliefs, (Centlivre's father was meant to have escaped England for Ireland because he was a Roundhead and supported the Parliament during the English Civil War), and he died when Centlivre was about three years old. Centlivre was raised by her mother, who soon remarried, but who died when Centlivre was twelve.<sup>131</sup> She was likely educated early, suggesting a more genteel birth, though she left home by age fifteen suffering abuse from a step-parent. Centlivre likely began appearing as an actress in breeches roles when she was fifteen or sixteen years old, possibly joining a group of strolling players in Stamford.<sup>132</sup> At around this same time, Centlivre married or cohabited with the nephew of Sir Stephan Fox. The early circumstances of her life may have been a factor in her seeking out work in the theatre that would allow her to support herself, given that her parents were both dead and nothing else is known about her familial connections.<sup>133</sup>

By 1700, when she was around thirty years of age, Centlivre's reputation as an actress led her to join the Theatre Royal Drury Lane, the same year that her first play, *The Perjur'd Husband; or, The Adventures of Venice* appeared. Shortly after Fox's death, Centlivre formed

another relationship with (or married) an army officer named Carroll, whose name she kept and performed under, She was known early on in her professional career as Susanna Carroll after her second unsuccessful marriage, until she married Joseph Centlivre in 1707, when she was approximately forty years old.<sup>134</sup> Joseph Centlivre, Queen Anne's cook, met the actress when she was playing the role of Alexander the Great in Nathaniel Lee's tragedy, *The Rival Queens* for the court at Windsor Castle.<sup>135</sup>

During Centlivre's extensive and successful theatre career with the Drury Lane Theatre, she moved in the highest literary circles, becoming close friends with actor, theatre manager and poet laureate Colley Cibber; playwright Nicolas Rowe (with whom she co-wrote several plays), and Irish writer and politician Richard Steele. Her comedies, *The Busie Body* (1709), *The Wonder: A Woman Keeps a Secret* (1714) and *A Bold Stroke for a Wife* (1718) were three of the most popular eighteenth-century plays written by any British playwright, man or woman.<sup>136</sup> Her plays traveled transatlantically and appeared before eighteenth-century audiences in America, Jamaica and Bermuda, and Ireland.<sup>137</sup> Likewise, *The Wonder* and *A Bold Stroke for a Wife* were performed consistently between 1770-1800, with publications of each of these plays, particularly, *The Wonder*, appearing almost annually between 1770-1800, three quarters of a century after Centlivre's death.<sup>138</sup> Her wit gained her the admiration of playwright George Farquhar (1677-1707), who supported her work, and she soon became friends with the actress Anne Oldfield (1683-1730), who often played the principal roles in her comedies.<sup>139</sup>

Centlivre, like Behn, advocated for public acceptance of women as intellectual contributors. Centlivre's *The Platonick Lady* (1707), for example, begins with the notice, "To all the Generous Encouragers of Female Ingenuity, this play is Humbly Dedicated."<sup>140</sup> Centlivre then presents an account of a gentleman who went to purchase her work only to find out that it was written by a woman, which leads him to reject his purchase because he believed that a woman's creative mind was inferior to a man's:

I can't forbear inserting a Story which my Bookseller, that printed my *Gamester*, told me, of a Spark that had seen my *Gamester* three or four times, and lik'd it extremely: Having bought one of the Books, ask'd who the Author was; and being told, a Woman, threw down the Book, and put up his Money, saying, he had spent too much after it already, and was sure if the Town had known that, it wou'd never have run ten days. No doubt this was a Wit in his own Eyes.<sup>141</sup>

Women playwrights knew that they walked a fine line in making their voices public and that male (and female) readers and audience members might be offended by knowing that the play was the work of a "Woman." Some women chose to publish their works anonymously in order to often avoid such discrimination. Centlivre published her works under her own name, though she also tried not to stand out intellectually as her canon of mostly sentimental comedies suggests.

According to theatre historian, Suzanne Kinney, many British women playwrights from this early period influenced how society imagined women. I would argue they did so under a paternalistic umbrella that both protected and shielded these women. The work women playwrights produced was often comedic, perhaps because comedies traditionally ended with marriage, a state which women were expected to understand and to which they were thought to aspire.<sup>142</sup> Yet even though they wrote plays which placed women in conventional roles that ended with marriage, I argue that both Behn and Centlivre managed to challenge the convention of marriage along with the role of women in marriage and in the greater seventeenth-century British society. In Behn's comedy, *The Rover*, for instance, Angellica Bianca acts as a stand in for the author in her actions; it is not subtle that she shares Behn's initials; AB. Angellica is also one of the characters in the myriad of name changing who does not change her name by play's end. In the same vein, Centlivre, who maintained such a great admiration of Aphra Behn that she borrowed Behn's pen name, Astraea, for herself, uses her main character, Miranda, as the invaluable manipulator of the plot in *The Busie Body*, who acts as a stand in for the playwright/Centlivre.<sup>143</sup> Centlivre appeared to understand the eighteenth-century shift toward more conservative drama and followed up her early success in rapid succession with three light-

hearted comedies, *The Beau's Duel; or, A Soldier for the Ladies* (1702), *The Stolen Heiress; or, The Salamanca Doctor Outplotted* (1702) and *Love's Contrivance; or, Le Médecin Malgré Lui* (1703).

Just as politically-minded as Behn but with different loyalties, Centlivre's political commentary hints at her anti-Catholic, Whig-embracing beliefs.<sup>144</sup> Centlivre adored Queen Anne, who died in 1714, but she took a pro-Hanoverian position, dedicating what would become one of her most famous plays, *The Wonder, a Woman Keeps a Secret* to King George I in 1714 (before Queen Anne's death);

To His Serene Highness George Augustus... I am sure I speak the Sense of every honest Briton, when I say that we expect it with the utmost Impatience. Your Highness, who has been hitherto a Stranger among us, cannot easily conceive the Confidence we repose in you; and it will, perhaps, hardly be believ'd in future Ages, that the first Report of the Duke of Cambridge's Design to Visit us, should raise the PUBLICK CREDIT of the British Nation. We are fill'd with Pleasure, to think that the most accomplish'd of Princes will perfect himself in the Arts of Government under the Eye, and Direction of the Greatest of Queens.<sup>145</sup>

At the height of her talent and popularity, Centlivre signed her dedication boldly, "I am your HIGHNESS'S Most Obedient, Most Devoted, Most Humble Servant SUSANNA CENTLIVRE."<sup>146</sup> Centlivre would write at least five more plays after *The Wonder, a Woman Keeps a Secret*, including one of her most successful, *A Bold Stroke for a Wife* (1718).<sup>147</sup>

Although Centlivre became one of the most prolific and popular playwrights, with her plays being performed hundreds of times throughout the British-speaking Atlantic world, many of her contemporaries judged her work as less competent simply because she was a woman.

Centlivre, along with many Anglophone women playwrights of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, did grapple to gain social acceptance and legitimacy. Within sixty years, the tone of Anglophone theatre had changed significantly and although Centlivre's plays, like Behn's, were often tinged with political and social commentary, they were already less overtly critical and controversial than Behn's plays produced just a few decades earlier.

**Aphra Behn's *The Rover* (1677) and Susanna Centlivre's *The Perjur'd Husband* (1700):  
Understanding the Commodification of Bodies and Words in Early Anglophone Women's**

**Drama**

As playwrights Aphra Behn and Susanna Centlivre literally and figuratively sold bodies of their works in paper form and the bodies of actresses who performed in their plays, taking advantage of audience desire to see women publicly displayed. They labored to create female archetypes whose characters were shaped by popular actresses as much as the actresses shaped and defined the rolls they played and audiences purchased the privilege to view these performances—neither Behn nor Centlivre became mothers and thus their only labor was with their “Masculine Parts” as Behn alluded to her (rather phallic) pen. The plays Behn and Centlivre wrote and the female characters they created, along with the actresses who performed these roles, became essential in crafting cultural representations of female bodies as consumers, commodities and the “consumed” that helped shape contemporary understandings of “normativity,” and in defining gender roles in a changed and changing Anglophone society.

Looking more closely at specific contributions, Behn's comedy *The Rover* empowered women while allowing her female characters to appear in the only real “roles” available to them at the time: chaste wife, devoted nun and licentious courtesan. Susanna Centlivre's comedy *The Perjur'd Husband*, likewise challenged conventional marriage roles and expectations and actually was modeled after Behn's successful play, *The Rover*. Behn's *The Rover* and Centlivre's *The Perjur'd Husband*, suggest that these women took advantage of audience interest and presented often scandalous and sexualized female characters, but they did so to show women as strong, independent and sexually liberated.<sup>148</sup> Both playwrights offered the possibility that women's objectification (as character, actress or woman) could be seen as powerful and empowered (as speaker/subject, controller or entertainment/plot, unique individual). Women were consumers as

audience members and readers of plays. They were also commodified or “consumed” in the form of performances, publications, as mistresses (particularly for actresses), and in various other material culture that emerged out of theatre including portraiture. This auto-erotic exchange took place publicly with male and female audience members purchasing a ticket for the performance or publication of a play and thus in a way they were active purchasers of the women (or their work) they came to ogle and admire. Plays acted both as a reflection of society and as a projection of how society should be (according to these women).<sup>149</sup>

First performed in 1677, *The Rover* speaks to this double standard of sexual license that limited women’s sexual desires to the home, brothel or convent.<sup>150</sup> Her epilogue mocks Puritanical prudishness “The devil’s in’t if this [play] will please the nation / in these our blessed times of reformation” and denigrates those seeking to censor theatre: individuals who “damn everything that maggot disapproves,” and want to censor theatre, “and to dull method all our sense confine.” Behn accusing the Puritan voice of “dulling” the audience’s sense, encourages our examination of the normative understandings of the late seventeenth-century English culture, specifically when considering gender and the place of women and women’s bodies onstage and off.

Behn’s three female characters, Florinda, Hellena and Angellica Bianca, are thrown into the topsy-turvy world of Carnival, where they participate in a complicated social game. Over the course of *The Rover*, each of these three very capable young women becomes the active wooer, thus challenging the limitations of traditional seventeenth-century British views on courtship and marriage. Even though these women make very different life choices, they do not subordinate themselves within the confines of Puritanical society. They act independently, choose freely and possess intellectual and emotional qualities that make them more than matches for the men they choose. Hellena vows to do “not as my wise brother imagines [for her future]...but to love and to be beloved” while her innocent sister, Florinda, believes she wants to withdraw to life in a

convent. Both of these sisters eventually challenge their brother's arrangements for them and Hellena retreats to life in a convent escaping a future as "handmaid to lazars and cripples" while Florinda marries her lover. On the other hand, the independent-minded and sexually free courtesan, Angellica Bianca, who actively wishes to love and be loved, sadly cannot escape her "libertine" lifestyle and thus is relegated back to life in a brothel. Yet Behn suggests that instead of simply being labeled a whore, Angellica Bianca, as a female libertine, should be seen as capable, independent, strong, and on equal terms with the men she encounters. These women act as agents in their sexual choices, suggesting they are not passive receivers of love or sex, but are in full possession of their sexual fates. Yet ultimately bowing to social convention, each woman chooses to share her body rather than remain autonomous.

The women's actions during Carnival and how they are treated also reflect the narrow social attitudes imposed upon them by Stuart England. Hellena and Florinda might, under their Carnival masks, indulge in sexual freedom, but instead choose to focus on securing their financial futures. Sex, as Hellena suggests, can be used to barter with but when loosely squandered, sexuality can stifle a woman's happiness. Behn's conventional and clean conclusion to the play that ends with marriage suggests her acceptance of the idea that British society offered women none of the libertinism Charles II's court embraced. Stuart society simply did not tolerate libertine women—perhaps Behn as playwright saw herself included in this censorship of sexual freedom and public display. Certainly in her association with Angellica Bianca, Behn recognized the type of "prostitution" in which she herself engaged, while selling her bodies of work to the highest bidder. Audiences allowed actresses a degree of physical freedom to use their bodies to advance their social standing both onstage and off as performers and mistresses and yet the social constraints imposed by a British society suggested these same audiences were not yet willing to accept the social and moral conversations publicly presented by women playwrights.

Using Carnival for her setting, Behn blurs social boundaries including gender, class and sexuality allowing her characters to hide behind masks and don clothing of the “other.” Disguises allow these women to “be mad as the rest, and take all innocent freedoms,” and even “outwit twenty brothers.” Dressed first as gypsies the women blur class distinctions, and when they lose their way in the festivities—literally becoming a blur in society—the ladies join in the crowd so that they appear to be courtesans, the most sexually liberated of women. In addition, appearing as gypsies who were recognized as social outliers allows these women to approach men in a sensual way. Placing these women outside the confines of social and cultural expectation reinforces Behn’s view that women should not be bound by societal restrictions.

Hellena and Angellica Bianca also cross-dress as men allowing them to approach and challenge men in ways women could not. When Hellena causes strife between Angellica Bianca and Willmore by telling Angellica that the “young English gentleman” has “broken his vows,” Angellica dresses in “a masking habit and vizard” and threatens Willmore with a pistol, a weapon used almost exclusively by men. Of course because she lives a libertine lifestyle and accepts money for sex, Angellica is destined never to be loved by Willmore. Placing Hellena and Angellica Bianca in male clothing also suggests women are not limited by their bodies—at least when they are hidden—and can seek sexual, judicial, romantic and libertine satisfaction on equal terms with men. Furthermore, Behn’s narrow-minded and physically inclined male characters in *The Rover* are easily controlled and manipulated by the female characters. Behn juxtaposes Hellena, Florinda and Angellica Bianca with the silly Cavaliers who are easily duped by whores, drunkenly accost women and, in the case of Pedro who is on the prowl for a conquest, nearly commit incestuous rape. While Florinda and Hellena seek and find sexual and emotional satisfaction, Angellica Bianca, as a “female libertine” who is paid for sex, remains outside acceptable society and ends up neither contented wife nor unimpassioned courtesan. Even in Behn’s imagination commodified female sensuality, premarital sex and marriage cannot combine.

Even so, Angellica Bianca does not change her name and remains true to herself and since, importantly, Angellica Bianca shares Aphra Behn's initials, AB, and thus acts as a stand in for the author, who also attempts to remain true to herself.

Written twenty-three years after *The Rover*, Centlivre's *The Perjur'd Husband* was her first attempt at playwriting and so it is not surprising that she mimicked the tragedies and comedies of Behn (particularly *The Rover*) and other Restoration authors.<sup>151</sup> A tragedy with a highly sexualized plot, Centlivre's first play, *The Perjur'd Husband*, echoed the more licentious style audiences familiar with Behn appreciated. Like *The Rover*, *The Perjur'd Husband* included cross-dressing, masks and disguises and contains a menagerie of feminine trials including male infidelity, social and class ranking, betrayals by other women and silencing of women's voices.<sup>152</sup> Unfortunately, unlike her imagined mentor, Centlivre's first attempt at playwriting failed and her play closed after its premier.<sup>153</sup> *The Perjur'd Husband* begins with the character of Lady Pizalta claiming, "I'm undone--- / That stranger there has charm'd my Heart: I feel / The Pow'r of conquering Love: quick, quickly tell me, / What shall I do to ease this racking Passion?" (I, i) The image of a woman undone emotionally and physically by a stranger (evoking also images of clothing undone and virginity lost) becomes one of the ruling themes of the play. Yet it is a man, Bassinio, a classic rake, who is at the heart of this tragedy. Loved by both his wife Placentia and the innocent Aurelia, he is the cause for the play's tragic ending. In a jealous rage, Bassino's wife Placentia, "dressed in Mans Cloaths," stabs her rival, Aurelia (who is betrothed to Alonzo but in love with Bassino).

Dressing as a man becomes a symbol of freedom for Placentia and allows her to commit murder—of another woman no less—yet the unpopularity of Centlivre's play suggests the audience's disapproval of female violence.<sup>154</sup> Yet Aurelia is not the only woman murdered for when Bassino comes upon the scene of her murder, he in turn stabs his wife, whom he does not recognize in her male clothing until she cries out for forgiveness; "pardon this rash Deed; blame

jealous Love-- / And grace me with a Sigh, that I may die contented.”<sup>155</sup> Placentia’s death scene and the repetition of the image of the (sexual) sigh creates a duality between love/sex and jealousy/death and reaches back to the sigh Lady Pizalta gives at the play’s beginning, further linking the idea of love with jealousy and death. Alonzo, betrothed to Aurelia, enters the chaotic scene and in turn strikes down Bassino, whom he assumes is responsible for the murder of his beloved. Alonzo holds Aurelia as she dies, telling her; “Oh! Treacherous Maid, thy Love has cost thee dear, / Think on thy broken Vows, and call to Heaven for Mercy. / Thy Death I will revenge, because I lov’d thee once.”<sup>156</sup> At almost the same moment Placentia is embraced by her husband, asking his forgiveness; “My Lord, my Husband, Oh! come nearer yet, / That I may take a parting Kiss, to smooth / My Passage to the Realms of endless Night. / So—Now—I die—much happier than I lived.”<sup>157</sup> Thus it is a kiss that leads Placentia down the path to death. Since Bassino, Placentia and Aurelia are locked in a tragic love triangle, they must die to repair moral order. Thus at the play’s conclusion, of the four lovers, only Alonzo remains. For Centlivre, love and unbridled passion led to death, whether it is the figurative death of a woman locked in a loveless marriage (although Placentia dies in the play—albeit dressed as a man) or the literal death of a woman caused by jealousy.<sup>158</sup>

Knowing that the public might be critical of her as a woman playwright, Centlivre’s Prologue humbly called attention to her gender; “At her Reflections none can be uneasy, / When the kind Creature does her best to please / Humbly she sues, and ‘tis not for your Glory / T’insult a Lady—when she falls before ye...Whate’er’s her Fate, she’s sure to gain the Field / For Women always conquer, when they yield.”<sup>159</sup> Unlike Behn’s portrayal of the actress Nell Gwyn as a triumphant warrior who deserved her fame, Centlivre’s Prologue invokes battle language that places women in positions of submission as they “fall” or “yield” to stronger powers that be. In fact, Centlivre suggests it is submission rather than strength that allows women like herself to “conquer.” The language invoked in *The Perjur’d Husband* also reflects the changing moral tone

invading and ultimately responsible for shaping eighteenth-century Anglophone theatre in which love conquers, passion racks, strangers charm. However, in *The Perjur'd Husband*, which results in the violent murders of two women and one man, Centlivre reflects the contemporary social belief that women are not allowed to be subject to their passions without consequence.

While early Anglophone women playwrights Aphra Behn and Susanna Centlivre took advantage of audience interest in seeing women displayed onstage and helped craft female “stereotypes,” they also influenced how British society could and should imagine women offstage. These playwrights publicly presented ideas about independent and sexually liberated women, in itself a risqué gesture. They crafted roles for actresses that played off audience curiosity in seeing sexual intrigues played out publicly, something that Centlivre, as an actress, perhaps understood even more clearly than Behn. While their words and ideas were sold to individuals in the form of published plays and while audiences paid for tickets to watch women perform their words onstage, both very public gestures, neither Behn nor Centlivre “sold out” as women because their work attempted to make a difference in how British society imagined women. And even though their plays commodified both women’s bodies and their own words as they attempted both to make a living by writing, Behn and Centlivre advocated that women were intellectually, politically and sexually independent, and that they were powerful arbiters of their own fates and speakers with an important voice.

### **Conclusion**

Restoration actresses were exploited, admired, derided, objectified, encouraged, respected, envied, and celebrated. They changed their clothes like they changed their characters or their lovers and in doing so they captured the public’s attention, becoming England’s first non-royal celebrities. Actresses challenged the rigid British social class structure not only by dressing as queens and duchesses onstage (and in clothing donated by the aristocracy no less, making them

even more legitimate replacements) but also by forming relationships with members of the royalty and the aristocracy, and by having their children or marrying gentlemen. The public enjoyed gossiping about the on- and offstage exploits of Restoration actresses, and theatre managers raked in the proceeds from the public attention. The court and wealthy members of the audience engaged in flirtatious encounters with these women and even women playwrights acknowledged the attention actresses were getting and wrote characters specifically showcasing the talents and reputations of London's most famous and infamous performers. Indeed, the growth of the acting professionalism for women led to significant changes in Anglophone theatre itself and ultimately resulted in the creation of the commoner/actress as celebrity and in the fracturing of the British social class structure. While Restoration actresses captured the attention of the public, women playwrights such as Aphra Behn and Susanna Centlivre struggled to rally against public censure in order to produce their plays. Considered a novelty as intellectual women, women playwrights walked a fine line between celebrity and social pariahs, and since playwriting required a greater degree of education (and thus privilege) in being able to read and write these women literally challenged the idea that males were considered intellectually superior. Acting, surprisingly, did not require an actress to be able to read or write, as we've seen with actresses like Nell Gwyn and Betty Mackerel, since an actress could hire a prompter to read aloud her lines or rehearse with a fellow actor who could read. Women playwrights were equally dependent on men to ensure their success as well and just as actresses depended on (mostly male) theatre managers to hire them, women playwrights depended on this patriarchal system to further their careers.<sup>160</sup>

Restoration drama presented plays filled with moral duplicity, intricate plots, sexual intrigues, and cross-dressing roles that played off audience interest in seeing women's bodies displayed and in mirroring gender fluidity present in English Restoration society. Restoration drama by the end of the seventeenth century shifted away from popularly staged plays about

histories and royalty to stage plays exploring domestic issues familiar to the growing middling classes, even staging plays where women's conflicts became centrally important. Women became principal actors in companies within two decades of taking the stage; some actresses even owned shares in these companies. Indeed, the most successful and prominent actresses could and often did command salaries commensurate with men; many actresses supported families or themselves on their stage pay. Because of their popularity, actresses supplanted female impersonators, whose need decreased significantly after 1670, yet cross-dressing roles remained popular, particularly with actresses in breeches roles that showcased their female figures. Low-born actresses decked out in elegant court hand-me-downs paraded across stage in the roles of ingénues, duchesses, and queens blurred rigid social lines restricting movement between classes in Restoration England and actresses gave the world something it had not yet experienced: the world's first commoner celebrities. At the same time, women-authored plays were performed regularly and successfully up until 1737, when England passed the Licensing Act that required all new plays to be approved by the Lord Chamberlain and the competitive world of playwrighting became even more restrictive and intense.<sup>161</sup>

The early successes of the first Anglophone actresses and playwrights led to a lasting acceptance of women as legitimate performers and authors. These women became role models for future generations who saw theatre as an opportunity for them provide for and work with their families, and as a way they could make respectable (if generally inferior) wages alongside men. Their recognized and lauded success familiarized English society with women engaging as public figures, and helped to transform Britain's restrictive class-based society by proving that women (indeed any individual) from all classes could raise their social positions. For better or worse, these women challenged late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth-century British society to rethink the role and expectations of women in the public sphere, and became the most talked about, admired and portrayed individuals both in portraiture and in print. Ultimately, theatre gave the

Anglophone world new celebrities, challenged normative gender behavior and expectations, and allowed women access to a very real and unmistakably influential public presence that changed the way the entire transatlantic Anglophone world thought about women, gender, entertainment and views on how Britons might participate in society.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> James Rees (Colley Cibber), *The Life of Edwin Forrest: With Reminiscences and Personal Recollections* (Philadelphia: T. B. Peterson & Brothers, 1874), 245. The year 1629 was the first year that Charles I ruled without Parliament and caused a large number of conservative groups to recoil from royal leadership. In June, a group of English Puritans sailed to Salem and established the Massachusetts Bay Colony and by August of that year the Massachusetts Bay Colony became self-governing. As Martin J. Havran comments, "Religion so permeated life in England during the early seventeenth century that scarcely any channel of human endeavor escaped its influence" including theatre. Martin J. Havran, "Parliament and Catholicism in England 1626-1629," *The Catholic Historical Review* Vol XLIV, No. 3 (Oct 1958), 273.

<sup>2</sup> Rees (Colley Cibber), *The Life of Edwin Forrest*, 245.

<sup>3</sup> Colley Cibber writes in *An Apology of the Life of Colley Cibber* (London, 1740), 55: "The characters of Women, on former Theatres, were perform'd by Boys, or young Men of the most effeminate Aspect. And what Grace, or Master-Stroke of Action, can we conceive such ungain Hoydens to have been capable of?"

<sup>4</sup> Prior to this period, royalty, the aristocracy, and the court generally received such public accolades and adulation on a level one might define as celebrity status. Yet by 1660, with continued social and political upheaval in Britain following the beheading of Charles I, the leadership of Oliver Cromwell still shaking the public's confidence in the king and his court (and possibly anticipating the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the attempt to overthrow James II after Charles II's death), admiration of governmental leaders was significantly diminished. While Charles II seemed indifferent to the continued conservative nature of the British population, highlighted by the licentious nature of Restoration drama more generally and his introduction of women specifically, under his brother, Catholic James II's more conservative rule, British society shifted to a more conservative tone, reflected in the change in Anglo theatre to social drama of the turn of the seventeenth century.

<sup>5</sup> In England through much of the seventeenth century, sumptuary laws dictated what persons of various ranks were allowed to wear, including what type of fabrics, colors, furs, and trims. These laws were meant to separate the various classes to ensure that they did not dress above their station or wear "unnecessary foreign wears...to such an extremity that the manifest decay of the whole realm is likely to follow." State issued at Greenwich, 15 June 1574, by Elizabeth I. In the Massachusetts Bay Colony, in contrast, only people of fortune (at least 200 pounds) could wear lace, silver and gold thread, buttons, cutwork, embroidery, hatbands, belts, ruffles, and capes, though the increase in the mercantile population and outright defiance of such restrictions led to outright denial of laws limiting clothing.

<sup>6</sup> The laws that made Restoration theatre possible lasted until the death of Queen Anne in 1713. These laws would change under the rule of the eighteenth century German Georges who railed against playwrights who used theatre to stage political diatribes. Restoration Theatre is generally marked by the period between 1660 and 1710. Augustan Theatre has no specific beginning period, but has a clear end with the passing of the 1737 Theatre Licensing Act, a form of censorship in which plays had to be submitted for approval to the Lord Chamberlain in order to be licensed for production in London. The Licensing Act of 1737 was an attempt to censor playwrights. This new law resulted in the resurgence of previously performed plays that did not have to seek approval. It also resulted in a high number of unmemorable plays that did not challenge the government, most of which fall under the category of sentimental comedies. A resistance within Anglophone theatre to this imposed censorship under the Licensing Act of 1737 led to British

managers, actors and playwrights desiring to seek new audiences across the Atlantic where such censorship was not enforced.

<sup>7</sup> Centlivre's *The Platonick Lady* (1707) begins with the notice, "To all the Generous Encouragers of Female In genuity, this play is Humbly Dedicated." Centlivre's remarks reveal the frustrating biases women playwrights had to endure by both male and female audiences and readers. Centlivre continues, "My Muse chose to make this Universal Address, hoping, among the numerous Crowd, to find some Souls Great enough to protect her against the Carping Malice of the Vulgar World; who think it a proof of their Sense, to dislike everything that is writ by Women." See Susanna Centlivre, *The Platonick Lady. A Comedy. As it is acted at the Queens Theatre in the Hay-Market. By the author of The gamester, and Love's Contrivance* (London: Printed for James Knapton, at the Crown in St. Paul's Church-Yard, 1707).

<sup>8</sup> While the arts had been repressed under Cromwell, during the Restoration Era drama flourished until 1737 when the Theatre Licensing Act was passed. The Theatre Licensing Act increased competition amongst playwrights generally, making it more difficult for women playwrights to succeed. However, between 1700 and 1737, a general increase in literacy amongst the middling and poorer classes in England gave women playwrights the opportunity to write for a wider audience with more varied interests. For example, Susanna Centlivre writing at the beginning of the eighteenth century could expect her readers to come from a greater variety of backgrounds than could Aphra Behn, writing during the last decades of the seventeenth century.

<sup>9</sup> Betty Mackerel was one of the orange girls who sold oranges and other services in the theatre during performances. She appeared in Thomas Duffett's 1674 production of the Restoration parody, *The Mock Tempest*. Mackerel (whose name is likely derived from the slang for bawd or whore) performed in the role of Ariel, singing "Where good ale is, there suck I." Mackerel probably represents the majority of actresses during the Restoration Era, whose less-appreciated performances suggest that while theatre provided the world with its first celebrities, there were also many women who scabbled together a living onstage and whose participation in theatre was not well-documented. See Ronald Eugene DiLorenzo, ed., *Three Burlesque Plays of Thomas Duffett*, (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1972).

<sup>10</sup> For more on early Italian actresses, see Rosamund Gilder, *Enter the Actress: The First Women in Theatre* (London: George G. Harrap and Co., 1931) 64. On early Spanish actresses see Melveena McKendrick, "Representing their Sex: Actresses in Seventeenth Century Spain" in Richard Pryn, *Rhetoric and Reality in Modern Spain* (Suffolk, UK: Tamesis Press, 2006), 72. On early French actresses see William Wiley, *The Early Public Theatre in France* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), 20-25, 85-92.

<sup>11</sup> Ariana Nozeman (1626-1661), the daughter of actor/playwright Adriaan van ben Bergh, made her debut onstage in Amsterdam at the Amsterdam Schouwberg (theatre) and is considered to have been the first Dutch professional actress. She likely performed with her father's touring company and may have joined Jan Baptist van Fornenbergh's theatre company, which performed in Northern Europe through the seventeenth century. Ariana was the first actress to perform the role of Badeloch in Joost van den Vondel's play, *Gijsbrecht van Aemstel*, a play set in the 14<sup>th</sup> century that tells of the siege of Amsterdam. Playwright and poet (and Catholic convert) Joost van den Vondel (1587-1679) is one of the Netherlands' most recognized and prolific seventeenth-century authors. He wrote at least twenty-six plays between 1610-1667. Dutch actress Susanna van Lee (c. 1630-1700) performed with Jan Baptist van Fornenbergh's theatre company and likely toured Germany, Sweden and Denmark with van den Bergh also performed in Amsterdam between 1655 and 1700. Elizabeth Baer Kalbergen (fl. 1662) also known as Elizabeth Boer, performed with Fornenbergh's company from 1649-1655. Sisters Susanna, Johanna, Cornelia and Anna van Fornenbergh and Dorotea van Fornenbergh (c. 1647-1697), performed with their father, Jan Baptist van Fornenbergh's traveling theatre company. See J.A. Worp, *Geschiedenis van den Amsterdamschen Schouwburg 1496-1772* (Amsterdam 1920). See also <http://resources.huylgens.knaw.nl/vrouwenlexicon/lemmata/data/Baer> accessed 22 May 2015.

<sup>12</sup> While 1660 marks the first time when women in England were officially allowed to participate publicly in theatre, women in England had performed privately onstage before 1660. For example, Queen Maria

Henrietta (1609-1666), sister of Louis XIII and Charles II's mother, entertained court audiences by acting in plays alongside her ladies-in-waiting.

<sup>13</sup> *Histrion-Mastix* addresses various reasons why Puritans were against theatre, from the effeminization of boys portraying women onstage to the use of obscene language, lascivious songs and dancing. Prynne presented his loathing of English Renaissance theatre by arguing against the "hypocrisie...obscenitie and lasciviousnesse...the gross effeminacy...and exreamie vanitie and folliw, which necessarily attends the acting of Playes." See William B. Worthen, *The Idea of the Actor* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 19.

<sup>14</sup> Stephen Orgel, *The Illusion of Power: Political Theatre in the English Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 44.

<sup>15</sup> Festival pageants engaged women to perform publicly in villages and towns and foreign divas (Italian acrobats and French actresses) entertained regularly in court before 1642. Thomas Norton during the reign of Queen Elizabeth complained about "the assemblies [of] the unchaste, shamelesse and unnaturall tombinges of the Italion Woemen." See Brown and Parolin, *Women Players in England*, 2.

<sup>16</sup> Musicals were excluded from these restrictions, perhaps because singing and music suggested pure entertainment whereas dialogue could be interpreted as instructional. Five years later, when this ordinance expired, "another and more imperative order was issued, in consequence of certain infractions of the previous one, threatening to imprison and punish as rogues all who broke its enactments." This enactment was followed by another, declaring actors to be "rogues and vagabonds" and threatened to whip any actor found performing. Even audience members were to be fined five shillings, more than the cost of a performance, if found attending a play. See Henry Barton Baker, *Our Old Actors*, (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1878), 35-36. See also Katherine Eisaman Maus, "'The Playhouse Flesh and Blood': Sexual Ideology and the Restoration Actress," *ELH*, Vol. 46, No. 4 (Winter, 1979), 595-617, 595.

<sup>17</sup> "A few of the nobility," theatre historian Henry Barton Baker wrote in 1878, "who loved the amusements of the stage, encouraged the players to act in their houses privately; but the watchful eyes of furious zealots prevented all public exhibitions. See Baker, *Our Old Actors*, 35-36.

<sup>18</sup> Oscar G. Brockett, *History of the Theatre*, (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1998); Dale B. J. Randall, *Winter Fruit: 1642-1660* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1995); Phillip Bordinat and Sophia B. Blaydes, *Sir William Davenant* (Boston: Twayne, 1981); Susan Wiseman, *Drama and Politics in the English Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>19</sup> With English theatre becoming illegal between 1642 and 1660 under Puritan influence, training for actors fell off, including training for female impersonators. Yet, because private performances continued women continued to perform (and informally train) alongside men. When William D'Avenant (1606-1668) (who would later be given a license to run the Duke's Company by Charles II) decided to stage his musical opera, *The Siege of Rhodes* in his own home in 1656 (performances were still technically illegal but musicals were less frowned upon), he hired "Mrs. Edward Coleman" (wife of the actor Mr. Edward Coleman) to appear before a paying audience. Mrs. Coleman's appearance, for all intents and purposes, made her the first (identifiable) professional English actress. After 1660, Charles II encouraged both William D'Avenant, who became manager of the patented Duke's Company and Thomas Killigrew (1612-1683), the patented manager of the King's Company, to hire women in their theatre companies. In response to Charles II's request, William D'Avenant hired eight actresses to perform with his company of players, including Mary Saunderson Betterton (married to the actor Thomas Betterton, 1637-1712), and Anne Gibbs Shadwell (married to playwright Thomas Shadwell, 1642-1692). See John Harold Wilson, *All the King's Ladies: Actresses of the Restoration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 8.

<sup>20</sup> Generally long and narrow and not ideal for viewing performances, tennis courts already had raised seats and a "pit" for audiences. Each company constructed a basic stage with "tiring" (attiring) areas for the actors to change costumes in or to rest between scenes; these spaces did not discriminate between men's and women's changing areas and male admirers often spoke to actresses as they changed costumes for their next scenes. In Restoration theatre, stages were broken up with various pieces of scenery to give dimension

to the stage and lighting was added—chandeliers, candles or lamps to provide mood. Male playwrights often directed their own plays, while theatre managers often directed plays written by women. Playwrights earned proceeds from their play's third and sixth night performances—on the first run (and certainly if they got that far; some plays closed after one night). Aphra Behn affirmed the idea that playwrights received the proceeds from the play's third consecutive performance when she wrote in her preface to *The Lucky Chance* "I am not content to write for a Third Day only" since she wished for more than money, she sought fame. See Aphra Behn, *The Lucky Chance; or, The Alderman's Bargain* as published in *The Works of Aphra Behn, Vol. III*, ed. By Montague Summers (1915), Prologue. Accessed on 12 June 2015 on <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/10039/pg10039.html>.

<sup>21</sup> In 1682, fearing failure and suffering from lack of audience attendance partly due to the Popish Plot (1678-1681), the two companies joined forces and temporarily became known as the United Company. The United Company performed primarily in the previous theatre of the King's Company, the Theatre Royal Drury Lane, while operas and spectacles were now performed in the Duke's Company's previous theatre, Dorset Garden Theatre.

<sup>22</sup> Allardyce Nicoll, *The History of Restoration Drama 1660-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928), 285-286 notes.

<sup>23</sup> Before 1660 women trained for roles in the theatre in much less obvious places. Queens and their ladies, members of the court, aristocrats and gentlewomen participated in plays, masques and private entertainments. See Pamela Allen Brown and Peter Parolin, eds., *Women Players in England 1500-1660: Beyond the All-Male Stage* (Farnham, Surrey, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2008).

<sup>24</sup> As quoted in Dympna Callaghan, *Shakespeare without Women* (London: Routledge, 2002), 72.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas Jordan speaks the Prologue to the 1663 production of *Othello* given by the King's Company. See H. H. Furness, ed., *Othello by William Shakespeare* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1886), 397

<sup>26</sup> Epicene itself is defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary as "having but one form to indicate either sex, having characteristics typical of the other sex, lacking characteristics of either sex." "Synonyms include "effeminate, unmanly, womanish." For more on Siddons and her ambiguous interpretation of gender as Hamlet, see Tony Howard, *Women as Hamlet: Performance and Interpretation in Theatre, Film and Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 40. According to Celestine Woo, Siddons designed her own costume for the role which she took on early in her career and acted until she was over fifty years old. The costume, Woo claims, was not particularly male or female in style, suggesting further complications in defining gender roles within theatre. Siddons also played the roles of Lady Macbeth and Ophelia to great effect. See Celestine Woo, "Sarah Siddons's Performances as Hamlet: Breaching the Breeches Part," *European Romantic Review*, Vol 18, Issue 5, 2007. Siddons performed Hamlet nine times during her thirty-year career, though never to audiences in London. She first appeared in the role in 1776 and continued to perform the role for audiences in Birmingham, Liverpool and Manchester. Siddons's good friend, actress and playwright Elizabeth Inchbald (1753-1841) also played the role of Hamlet in 1780, and in 1796 Jane Powell (c. 1761-1831) played Hamlet to London audiences and was likely the first actress to do so in London. According to the *Morning Post* "the performance of Mrs Powell was by no means indifferent. [She] looked the character remarkably well; what is, according to the general idea of the personal requisitions of the part." See Howard, *Women as Hamlet*. Siddons appeared uncomfortable in cross-dressing roles; "[h]er Hamlet attempted to reinvent *transvesti* prioritizing an androgyny not of the eroticized body but of the mind." See Tony Howard, *Women as Hamlet*, 40. Siddons was cast by David Garrick as Epicœne in John Dryden's play by that name, as the sharp-tongued wife who is actually a boy. See Howard, *Women as Hamlet*, 39-45.

<sup>27</sup> Elizabeth Howe, *The First English Actresses: Women and Drama 1660-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Mary Luckhurst and Jane Moody eds., *Theatre Celebrity in Britain, 1660-2000* (New York: Palgrave, 2005); Cynthia Lowenthal, *Performing Identities on the Restoration Stage* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2003).

<sup>28</sup> An interesting *transvesti* performer, Mary Firth, also known as Moll Cutpurse (c. 1584-1659) did appear onstage in male disguise at the Fortune Theatre in London. The Fortune Theatre, established around 1600 by Philip Henslowe of the Admiral's Theatre and his son-in-law, actor Edward Alleyn. It remained active from 1600 until its repression by Puritan Parliament in 1642. See Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage, 1574-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

<sup>29</sup> Dympna Callaghan, *Shakespeare without Women* (London: Routledge, 2002), 72.

<sup>30</sup> Puritans disapproved of the lascivious nature of English Renaissance theatre (see William Prynne's 1633 publication, *Histrion-Mastix*). They particularly disliked the unnaturalness of theatre—from boys performing in the roles of women to the over-exaggeration of actors. Theatre also had a long tradition of being politically contentious. For comments on English Renaissance theatre and its political ramifications see Robert Weinmann, et. al., *Author's Pen and Actor's Voice: Playing and Writing in Shakespeare's Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), Worthen, *The Idea of the Actor*; Orgel, *The Illusion of Power: Political Theatre in the English Renaissance*; Monica Brito Vieira, *The Elements of Representation in Hobbes: Aesthetics, Theatre, Law, and Theology in the Construction of Hobbes's Theory of the State* (Leiden: Brill, 2009); Henry S. Turner, *Early Modern Theatricality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). The political nature of theatre and its influence on thinkers such as Thomas Hobbes provides an intriguing early view of the political and cultural influence of theatre in colonial America as argued in Jean-Christophe Agnew's *Worlds Apart: The Market and the Theater in Anglo-American Thought, 1550-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

<sup>31</sup> Seventeenth-century diarist Samuel Pepys (1633-1703), witnessed Kynaston playing the Duke's sister in John Fletcher's tragicomedy, *The Loyall Subject* (1647). After his performance, Kynaston joined Pepys and a small group of men for drinks. The Cockpitt Theatre in Whitehall Palace was built in 1529 as a tennis court, and also served as a bowling alley, tiltyard and cock-fighting pen. It was redesigned in 1629 by Inigo Jones as a private theatre for Charles I, and was further updated as a theatre in 1662. Pepys attended several performances at this theatre. See Samuel Pepys *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, Entry, Saturday, April 18, 1660, as accessed in <http://www.pepysdiary.com/archive/1667/08/17/> on 24 September 2012.

<sup>32</sup> Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, Entry Monday, January 7, 1660/61. Kynaston's career spanned decades but his popularity did not protect him from physical abuse by theatre-goers. Pepys writes "away with my wife by coach to the King's playhouse, thinking to have seen *The Heyresse* first acted on Saturday last; but when we come thither, we find no play there; Kinaston, that did act a part therein, in abuse to Sir Charles Sedley, being last night exceedingly beaten with sticks, by two or three that assaulted him, so as he is mightily bruised. And forced to keep his bed." See Pepys *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, Entry, Monday, February 1, 1668/69, as accessed in <http://www.pepysdiary.com/archive/1667/08/17/> on 24 September 2012.

<sup>33</sup> Pepys *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, Entry, Thursday, May 7, 1668, as accessed in <http://www.pepysdiary.com/archive/1667/08/17/> on 28 September 2012.

<sup>34</sup> Colley Cibber, *An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber, with an Historical View of the Stage During His own Time, Written by Himself*, R. S. Fone Byrne, ed., (Mineola, NY: Courier Dover, 2000) 71.

<sup>35</sup> Dympna Callaghan, *Shakespeare without Women* (London: Routledge, 2002), 73.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, 73.

<sup>37</sup> Nell's first known appearance onstage was in John Dryden's *The Indian Emperour*, in which she played Cydaria, Montezuma's daughter and Cortez's love interest—giving a definitive nod to the transatlantic nature of theatre and the importance of the indigenous New World savage even in the late seventeenth century.

<sup>38</sup> Many of these women became celebrities of a different kind from actresses. For example, Aphra Behn served as a spy for the government and became a playwright; Jane Sharp published *The Midwives Book; or, the Whole Art of Midwifery* in 1671; Irish-born Christian Davis (also called "Mother Ross") served as a soldier in the British Army in disguise for several years at the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the

eighteenth century until she was found out while seeking a husband; English traveler Celia Fiennes (who never married) published a traveler's memoir of her adventures in 1702. Each of these women pursued occupations that challenged society's expectations of women in the public sphere, even at the end of the seventeenth century. It might even be posited that because of actresses appearing onstage, these women ventured to reach beyond expected womanly behavior as wives and mothers and to challenge the societal beliefs that limited women's accepted behavior. See Allan I. Macinnes, *The British Revolution, 1629-1660* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

<sup>39</sup> Samuel Pepys, *The Concise Samuel Pepys*, (London: Wordsworth Edition, 1997), 647.

<sup>40</sup> Elizabeth Howe, "A State of Undress. The first British actresses on stage: 1660-1700," in Elizabeth Woodrough, *Women in European Theatre* (London: Intellect Books, 1995), 15.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, 15.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, 16.

<sup>43</sup> Colley Cibber, *An Apology of the Life of Colley Cibber* (London, 1740), 55.

<sup>44</sup> Will Pritchard, *Outward Appearances: The Female Exterior in Restoration London* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 2008), 15.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, 16.

<sup>46</sup> Aphra Behn, *The Lucky Chance*, Preface.

<sup>47</sup> Kathy Newman, *Fashioning Femininity and English Renaissance Drama* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 6.

<sup>48</sup> Alice Clark, *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century* (London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd., 1919), 306.

<sup>49</sup> Jean E. Howard, "Crossdressing, The Theatre, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No. 4. (Winter, 1988), 418-440 (440)

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, 418-440 (440).

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, 440.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, 440.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, 440.

<sup>54</sup> For further discussion about Sexual Politics and theatre see Michelene Wandor, *Carry on Understudies: Theatre and Sexual Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 13-16. See also, Jean E. Howard, "Crossdressing, The Theatre, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No. 4. (Winter, 1988), 418-440.

<sup>55</sup> Male theatre managers predominantly hired and trained actresses and produced women's plays and at least initially in Restoration theatre, women's roles were often in support of men's roles. While audiences were indeed comprised of both men and women, men overwhelmingly had the funds (and social acceptance) to form relationships with actresses, many of whom bore their children and became their wives and mistresses.

<sup>56</sup> Elaine Hobby, *Virtue of Necessity: English Women's Writing, 1649-1688* (London: Virago Press, 1988).

<sup>57</sup> Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness: From the Middle Ages to Eighteen-Seventy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, 273-4.

<sup>59</sup> Barbara Kiefer Lewalksi, *Writing Women in Jacobean England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 308-310.

<sup>61</sup> Behn's plays are not significantly different in content from plays written by her male contemporaries though Behn does foreground women's social positions and the roles they are allowed in late seventeenth-century British society. Yet while Behn has multiple opportunities in *The Rover* to question society's restrictions on women, she does not insist on social change. Instead she suggests women should be considered sexual equals rather than intellectual equals. Behn places her female characters in conventionally acceptable roles as (dutiful) wives, (virtuous) nuns, and (licentious) prostitutes, roles available to late seventeenth-century society British women. Since Behn, a loyal royalist, admired and appreciated the Charles II's court and its sexually liberated attitudes, the environment in which she wrote both influenced her plays and is reflected in her plays.

<sup>62</sup> Joy Wiltenburg, *Disorderly Women and Female Power in the Street Literature of Early Modern England and Germany* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1992).

<sup>63</sup> Jo Wallwork and Paul Salman, eds., *Early Modern Englishwomen Testing Ideas* (Burlington and Aldershot: Ashgate Press, 2011).

<sup>64</sup> Sara Heller Mendelson, *The Mental World of Stuart Women* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987) and Cheryl Turner, *Living by the Pen: Women Writers in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge Press, 1992).

<sup>65</sup> Paul Salzman, *Early Modern Women's Writing: An Anthology 1560-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), xii.

<sup>66</sup> Lizbeth Goodman and W.R. Owens, *Shakespeare, Aphra Behn and the Canon* (London: Routledge, 2013), 132. Owens also writes that Behn's play *The Rover*, wildly popular when it was first performed in 1677 and remaining in regular performance rotation until 1743, was revived only a handful of times thereafter and was then not performed with any regularity until the twentieth century. See Goodman and Owens, *Shakespeare, Aphra Behn and the Canon*, 131.

<sup>67</sup> Goodman and Owens, *Shakespeare, Aphra Behn and the Canon*, 135.

<sup>68</sup> Aphra Behn claimed to be married but did live a complicated life as a world traveler, royal spy and who may have also challenged sexual norms as a lesbian or bi-sexual woman,

<sup>69</sup> Aphra Behn, *The Rover, Part I, Prologue*. As accessed on Project Gutenberg, 12 June 2015. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/21339/21339-h/files/rover.html#rover1>.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, Act I.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, Act I.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, Act I.

<sup>73</sup> In the end of *The Perjur'd Husband*, Alonzo, arises as the most morally sound character and emerges morally untainted by sexual duplicity (his murder of Bassino is excused as an act of vengeance for believing wrongly that he killed Alonzo's love, Aurelia).

<sup>74</sup> Susanna Centlivre, *The Perjur'd Husband; or, The Adventurers of Venice*, Prologue. From, *The Works of the Celebrated Mrs. Centlivre., Volume One* (London: Printed for J. Knapton, C. Hithc and L. Hawes, 1761). <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/38931/38931-h/38931-h.htm> Accessed 12 June 2015.

<sup>75</sup> The House of Stuart (1689-1714) headed first by William III and Mary II and then by Queen Anne, was followed by the House of Hanover (1714-1820), led by King George I.

<sup>76</sup> Victoria Warren, "Genre and Gender in Susanna Centlivre's *The Gamester* and *The Basset Table*," *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* (Vol. 43, No. 3) Restoration and Eighteenth Century (Summer 2003), 605-624.

<sup>77</sup> Samuel Astley Dunham, *Lives of the most eminent and scientific men of Great Britain, Volume 3* (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1837), 93.

<sup>78</sup> The cast of this play was not listed, a practice that would soon come to be common as women in particular gained celebrity status. See Samuel Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, Entry Thursday 3 January 1660/61. <http://www.pepysdiary.com/archive/1661/01/03/> Accessed on 9 October 2012.

<sup>79</sup> John Downes, *Roscius Anglicanus* (London, 1706; reprinted New York: Benjamin Bloom, 1968), 100.

<sup>80</sup> Gwyn was born in Coal Yard Alley, London, an area John Strype's described in his "A Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster" (1720) and as being "A little beyond Drury Lane is The Coal Yard, which hath a passage into Drury Lane already spoken of." [http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/strype/TransformServlet?page=book4\\_084](http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/strype/TransformServlet?page=book4_084) accessed 4 April 2016. Charles II used the theatre as his personal playground for female companionship. On Monday, December 21, 1668, Samuel Pepys recorded being at the Duke's Playhouse to see *Macbeth* and sat in a box under Charles II and his brother the Duke of York. Sitting close to Pepys (and the King and Duke of York) were "my Lady Castlemayne, and close to the woman that comes into the pit, a kind of a loose gossip, that pretends to be like her, and is so, something." Lady Castlemaine was mistress to Charles II for about a dozen years and bore several of his children. Pepys himself was enamored of her but feared, like many others, that she had too great an influence over the king. Lady Castlemaine, however, wasn't Charles II's only mistress in the house that night. According to Pepys Moll Davis also sat in a box above the king's; "The King and Duke of York minded me, and smiled upon me, at the handsome woman near me but it vexed me to see Moll Davis, in the box over the King's and my Lady Castlemayne's head, look down upon the King, and he up to her; and so did my Lady Catlemayne once, to see who it was; but when she saw her, she looked like fire, which troubled me." See Samuel Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, Entry, Monday, December 21, 1668, as accessed in <http://www.pepysdiary.com/archive/1667/08/17/> on 29 September 2012.

<sup>81</sup> The title "orange girl" describes young women who sold oranges, sweet treats (even sex) to customers during performances. Former prostitute Mary Meggs (fl. 1660-1691), was the first woman named "Orange Moll," and obtained a license to "vend, utter and sell oranges, lemons, fruit, sweetmeats and all manner of fruiterers and confectioners wares." As quoted in Charles Beauclerk, *Nell Gwyn: Mistress to a King* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2005), 56. Meggs was a good friend of Nell Gwyn's mother. She hired Nell and her older sister, Rose, to sell fruit to audience members at the Theatre in Bridges Street, later rebuilt and renamed Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. Pepys records Orange Moll, associated with the King's House, as a theatre presence and not just as a fruit vendor. On Saturday 2 November 1667 Pepys records; "The house full of Parliament-men, it being holyday with them: and it was observable how a gentleman of good habit, sitting just before us, eating some fruit in the midst of the play, did drop down as dead, being choked; but with much ado Orange Moll did thrust her finger down his throat, and brought him to life again." Orange girls received a percentage of the profits from the performance in exchange for their sales and services and as an integral part of the theatre scene, these girls became part of the "live" performance itself. Restoration theatres were built specifically with a third tier intended for prostitutes to carry on business during performances, and orange girls and Restoration actresses often prostituted themselves similarly to supplement their income. The Drury Lane Theatre had an apron stage and a pit filled with benches rather than standing groundlings (as they were called). Society from all classes congregated at the theatre in a more or less democratic manner. Samuel Pepys, *Diary of Samuel Pepys*, Vol. 2, (London: J.M. Dent and Co., 1908) 381.

<sup>82</sup> Charles Beauclerk, *Nell Gwyn: Mistress to a King*, (Atlantic Monthly Press, 2005), 56.

<sup>83</sup> Florizel was the role of a mad girl who dresses as a boy in John Dryden's *The Maiden Queene*. This role allowed Nell to wear breeches, and thus showing her legs. See Samuel Pepys, *Diary of Samuel Pepys*, 2 March 1667 <http://www.pepysdiary.com/diary/1667/03/> accessed on 20 September 2014.

<sup>84</sup> Pepys, *Diary of Samuel Pepys*, 2 March 1667 <http://www.pepysdiary.com/diary/1667/03/> accessed on 20 September 2014.

<sup>85</sup> Nell Gwyn was reputed to have been the mistress of several gentlemen, among them: Charles Sackville, Lord Brockhurst; John Wilmot, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Rochester; George Villiers, 2<sup>nd</sup> Duke of Buckingham; Henry Jermyn, Lord Dover; Count de Grammont. For a more complete discussion of the life of Nell Gwyn, see Lewis Melville and Lewis Saul Benjamin, *Nell Gwyn: the Story of Her Life* (New York: George H. Doran, Co., 1924). [https://archive.org/stream/nellGwynstoryofh00melviala/nellGwynstoryofh00melviala\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/nellGwynstoryofh00melviala/nellGwynstoryofh00melviala_djvu.txt) accessed on 5 September 2014.

<sup>86</sup> Behn provided a verbal image of Gwyn as an enchanting woman. She wrote a dedication in her play, *The Feign'd Curtizan* (1679), that praised Gwyn's beauty, her natural talents and her seductive power over men; "who can doubt the Power of that Illustrious Beauty, the Charms of that tongue, and the greatness of that minde, who has subdu'd the most powerfull and Glorious Monarch in the world: And so well you bear the honours you were born for, with a greatness so unaffected, and affability so easie, an Humor so soft, so far from pride or Vanity, that the most Envious & most disaffected can finde no cause or reason to wish you less, Nor can Heaven give you more." See Behn, *The Feign'd Curtizan, or, A Nights Intrigue, a Comedy as it is Acted at the Dukes Theatre* (London: Printed for Jacob Jonson at the Judges head in Chauncery-Lane near Fleet-Street, 1679), 3-4.

<sup>87</sup> Gentlemen were not the only ones who took on performers as lovers. Lady Castlemaine, Barbara Palmer (1640-1709), the most infamous of Charles II's mistresses and mother of five of his children, took on other lovers of her own. According to Samuel Pepys, Lady Castlemaine and the actor Charles Hart were an item; "7<sup>th</sup> April 1668. Mrs. Knipp tells me that my Lady Castlemaine is mightily in love with Hart, of their house; and he is much with her in private, and she goes to him, and do give him many presents; and that the thing is most certain, and Becke Marshall [actress Rebecca Marshall] only privy to it, and the means of bringing them together, which is a very odd thing; and by this means she is even with the King's love to Mrs Davis." See Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, Entry 7 April 1668, <http://www.pepysdiary.com/archive/1668/04/07/> Accessed on 9 October 2012. Lady Castlemaine also became the lover of the acrobatic performer, Jacob Hall, and at age forty five, after Charles II's death, she had a relationship with the actor Cardell Goodman (1649-1699), a member of the King's Company and a character of ill repute. He was even thought to have tried poisoning the Duchess's children, and was put to trial and fined for his crimes. Goodman was also convicted of highway robbery and in 1688 removed himself from the stage to take up gambling professionally. See Antonia Fraser, *King Charles II* (Phoenix: Phoenix Paperbacks, 2002), 230-231.

<sup>88</sup> Florizel was the role of a mad girl who dresses as a boy in John Dryden's *The Maiden Queene*. This role allowed Nell to wear breeches, and thus showing her legs. See Pepys, *Diary of Samuel Pepys*, 2 March 1667 <http://www.pepysdiary.com/diary/1667/03/> accessed on 20 September 2014.

<sup>89</sup> Around 1680, one of the principal artists of the day, Dutch painter Simon Pietersz Verelst, painted what is likely the most famous portrait of Gwyn. If her portrait is a true representation, it appears that she was strikingly pretty, with regular features and large dark eyes. She carried on a lifelong affair with Charles II that resulted in the birth of two of his children. Verelst's portrait of Gwyn was likely commissioned by Charles II for his own personal use; the portrait's rather diminutive size (29" x 24 7/8") suggests that it might have been displayed in his private boudoir. Verelst's portrait is the first of many images of Gwyn, whose popularity as an actress translated into profit for others in the form of commercial goods including ink prints, portraits, and even pamphlets that described her scandalous relationship with Charles II. Many early portraits of these actresses were self-promotional and Verelst's portrait of Gwyn appears to have captured her provocative theatricality, and even her nod toward (and acceptance of) her celebrity status. Gwyn appears rather more demure than blatantly sexualized, in spite of sexual tropes apparent within this painting. Verelst's portrait of Gwyn is among the first ever painted of an English actress. Thus not only do we garner insight into Gwyn's character (as interpreted by Verelst), we also see something into the material culture that made these actresses who they were, including the clothing, hairstyles and painted faces. Gwyn rose from the lowest class of society in London to the highest class as a publicly admired and adored actress and mother of two of King Charles II's sons, as well as the lover of both the actor Charles Hart (1625-1683), and of Charles Sackville, 6<sup>th</sup> Earl of Dorset (1638-1706). It is rumored that a portrait of Nell Gwyn was hung in one of Charles II's private rooms in Whitehall palace concealed behind a landscape

painting. See Lyle Brennan, "Ye olde Charlie's angels! Ravishing baroque portraits of Stuart women from court of 'merry monarch' to be shown at Hampton Court exhibit," from *The Daily Mail*, March 8, 2012, 2.

<sup>90</sup> In a culture increasingly interested in fashion, scandal and social intrigue, portable copies of the latest infamous actresses generated public awareness and interest. Actors and actresses of this period became haute commodities, and this tradition of commodifying actresses' images in material culture continued throughout the eighteenth century. While portraying actresses in portraits was popular in England, the tradition of actress portraiture did not immediately follow actresses on their adventures overseas in the British Caribbean and in British Colonial America. It was not until the nineteenth century that actresses in these two locations, particularly in the United States, gained such celebrity status associated with material culture.

<sup>91</sup> In October 2011, London's National Portrait Gallery put on a three-month exhibition, *The First Actresses*, the first actress of note being Nell Gwyn. In June of 2011, a new portrait of Nell Gwyn was sold by descendants of Gwyn through her son by Charles II, the Duke of St Albans. In this second portrait Nell is being watched by a slave while she stuffs sausages, clearly a sexual image and likely painted for Charles II's personal boudoir. See Dalya Alberge, "Graphic portrait of Charles' Second mistress comes to light; 17<sup>th</sup>-century actress Nell Gwyn depicted in composition laden with lewd symbolism," *The Guardian*, 28 June 2011. For more on the creation of the celebrity in the eighteenth century see Laura Engel, *Fashioning Celebrity, Eighteenth-Century Actresses and Strategies for Image Making* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2011); Leo Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and Its History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997); Robyn Asleson, ed., *Notorious Muse: The Actress in British Art and Culture, 1776-1812*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003); Ann Bermingham, "Elegant Females and Gentlemen Connoisseurs: The Commerce in Culture and Self-Image in Eighteenth-Century England," in *The Consumption of Culture, 1600-1800: Image, Object, Text*, ed., by Bermingham John Brewer, (London: Routledge, 1997); Christopher Brewer, *The Culture of Fashion* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995); John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Laura Engel, "The Muff Affair: Fashioning Celebrity in the Portraits of Eighteenth-Century British Actresses," *Fashion Theory: A Journal of Bosy, Dress & Culture* 13.3 (2009): 279-298; Cynthia Lowenthal, *Performing Identities on the Restoration Stage* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2003); Mary Luckhurst and Jane Moody eds., *Theatre Celebrity in Britain, 1660-2000* (New York: Palgrave, 2005); Sandra Richards, *The Rise of the English Actress* (Boston: St. Martin's Press, 1993).

<sup>92</sup> Similar cases of the transportable portraiture of actresses occur throughout the eighteenth century. Laura Engel argues that actresses became "fashioned celebrities" by 1800. She argues that eighteenth century actresses used conventions of contemporary painting, fashion and literature to refashion themselves into heroines onstage and off. While their attempts to achieve celebrity status were innovative, I would also argue that such behavior began a century before with the entrance of late seventeenth-century actresses onstage. These earlier women also fashioned themselves into celebrity status by playing up social intrigue, propagating rumors that benefitted their own social standing and by becoming fashion icons the public desired to emulate. For more on eighteenth-century actresses see Laura Engel, *Fashioning Celebrity, Eighteenth-Century Actresses and Strategies for Image Making* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2011), 2.

<sup>93</sup> Engel, *Fashioning Celebrity*, 8.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. See also Leo Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and Its History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997).

<sup>95</sup> Elizabeth Howe, *The First English Actresses: Women and Drama 1660-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) for an overview of early actresses in England. For more on the phenomenon and development of the culture of celebrity and actresses, see Lowenthal, *Performing Identities on the Restoration Stage*; Engel, *Fashioning Celebrity*; Mary Luckhurst and Jane Moody eds., *Theatre Celebrity in Britain, 1660-2000* (New York: Palgrave, 2005); Sandra Richards, *The Rise of the English Actress*

(Boston: St. Martin's Press, 1993). See also Leo Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and Its History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997).

<sup>96</sup> Howe, *The First English Actresses*, 22-24.

<sup>97</sup> The daughter of a Presbyterian minister, Marshall the younger sister of previously established actress Anne Marshall (fl. 1661-1682), began appearing onstage in 1663 when Anne took a brief sabbatical from acting. She was a reputed beauty, which caused her enough grief that she asked for protection from male audience members who pursued her by petitioning King Charles II. Howe, *The First English Actresses*, 33.

<sup>98</sup> "Chestnut-maned" Boutell appeared as Bezayda, a Zegrys with whom Ozmyn, an Abencerrage tribe member falls in love. Marshall appeared as Lyndaraxa, sister of the leader of the Zegrys, one of the two warring factions of Moors, with whom two Abencerrage men vie for attention. Elizabeth Boutell appears in an anonymous satire, "A Session of Ladies" (1688) along with several other "famous" ladies. Clearly the poet did not believe Boutell's childlike nature was believable. In the ninth stanza the poet writes: "There was chestnut-maned Boutell, whom all the Town fucks, / Lord Lumley's cast player, the famed Mrs. Cox, / And chaste Mrs. Barry, I'th'midst of a flux, / To make him a present of chancre and pox." See John Harold Wilson, *Court Satires of the Restoration*, (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1976), "A Session of Ladies," 206.

<sup>99</sup> Another popular Restoration period actress, Elizabeth Boutell (or Bowtel, nee Ridley, fl. 1650-1715), began her career in the 1670s with the King's Company. Boutell remained with the King's Company from 1670-1688, moved to the United Company from 1688-1690 and then ended her career with the Lincoln's Inn Fields Company from 1695-1696. Boutell specialized in breeches rolls and Thomas Betterton's description of Boutell suggests her suitability to the innocent heroine; "Her voice was weak, tho' very mellow, she generally acted the follows; "Her voice was weak, tho' very mellow, she generally acted the young innocent lady whom all the heroes are mad in love with." Cited in James Ogden, *William Wycherley: The Country Wife* (London: A&C Black, 2003), xxx. The prologue of Dryden's *Conquest of Granada* for this production was spoken by Nell Gwyn, who also acted the role of Alimahide, with whom the hero Almanzor is in love. In fact, in the premier production of William Wycherley's *The Country Wife* (1675), Boutell made her first appearance as a married woman, the young innocent Mrs. Pinchwife married to elderly actor Michael Mahun's Pinchwife. All of Boutell's previous known performances had been as unmarried women.

<sup>100</sup> Marshall did not marry and while it is not known how she died, she did continue acting during her final year, appearing in several performances including John Crowne's *The Destruction of Jerusalem* (1677) as both Queen Berenice and as Clarona, and in Nathaniel Lee's blank verse tragedy, *The Rival Queens, or the Death of Alexander the Great* (1677) as Roxana and Statira. In Lee's exceedingly popular play, Marshall appears as both the jealous first wife, Roxana, and as the favored second wife, Statira. Howe, *The First English Actresses*, 152-153.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, 152-153.

<sup>102</sup> Not known for her beauty, Barry depended upon her acting skills. She performed for over thirty years and her career was one of the longest of these early actresses (from 1675 to 1708). In 1681, Barry acted the role of La Nuche in Behn's *The Rover*, the woman with whom Willmore, "the Rover," is in love. She also appeared in *The Second Part of The Rover*. While this second play was not as popular as *The Rover* (1677), Elizabeth Barry's casting in the play increased its popularity. Barry then joined Thomas Betterton's troupe where she became one of the original company shareholders and as such provided her with a share of the company's profits. While actresses might redeem their lascivious reputations by marrying, or through their extraordinary performances that allowed audiences to forgive and forget their moral turpitude, women who lived for their professions were seen as slightly dangerous men who felt threatened by their independence.

<sup>103</sup> Barry, like Beck Marshall, never married but she did have multiple affairs, resulting in the birth of two daughters, one daughter by John Wilmot, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Rochester (1647-1680) the celebrated satirist, and another daughter by playwright George Etherege (1636-1692). Both men knew each other well and moved

in the same social circles. Her success onstage made her an admired actress by the public in spite of not marrying either of the two men with whom she had two daughters.

<sup>104</sup> *The Tragedy of Jane Shore* was one of Rowe's most popular plays and continued to play throughout the transatlantic Anglophone world through the end of the eighteenth century. Unfortunately, Rowe's *Tragedy of Lady Jane Grey* did not yield such great success and he ceased writing in the genre after the failure of this play. On April 20, 1770, *Jane Shore* was produced for Miss Hallam's benefit in Philadelphia. During the American Revolution when American citizens disparaged public performances, the British military produced Rowe's play at least seven times between 1779-1783. Jared Brown, *The Theatre in America during the Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 111 and Appendix, 173-187.

<sup>105</sup> It may have been Otway's writing of the character Monimia in *The Orphan* (1690) and Elizabeth Barry's performance of it in particular that solidified the popularity of "she-tragedy" in Anglophone theatre for the next half century. These three roles were Monimia in Thomas Otway's *The Orphan* (1680), Belviderra in Otway's *Venice Preserved* (1682), and Isabella in Thomas Southerne's *The Fatal Marriage, or the Innocent Adultery* (1694). Southerne's *The Fatal Marriage* (later known as *Isabella, or The Fatal Marriage*) was actually based on a short story by Aphra Behn *The History of the Nun* (1688). Southerne again used Behn as a source of inspiration writing the tragedy, *Oroonoko, or The Royal Slave* (1696), a novel of Behn's published in 1688 and based (perhaps loosely) on her own experiences in Surinam. Southerne's play *Oroonoko* was highly successful and played throughout the eighteenth century, even being seen by Omai, a young Pacific Islander who was brought to England in 1774, further suggesting the transatlantic nature of Anglophone theatre. Audiences were very interested in the world of travel and the exotic and Southerne's theatrical version of Behn's work presented (à la *Othello*) a black-faced male lead performing with a white heroine. Southerne also interwove sexual subplots and comedy to keep the entertainment from being too tragic. In Behn's version of the story, Imoinda is black, while in Southerne's version, she is white, further complicating racial complexities that would grow during the eighteenth century. The role of Imoinda was a prized role and several of the eighteenth-century's best actresses played it including Elizabeth Hartley (1751-1824) and Mary Ann Yates (1728-1787). Elizabeth Hartley was memorialized in the role by John Thornthwaite, a printmaker who crafted the print of Hartley as Imoinda around 1777. David Garrick, perhaps the eighteenth century's most recognized and lauded actor and a great supporter of women playwrights and actresses, made his debut in Southerne's *Oroonoko* in Ipswich. Garrick also traveled with this company and appeared as Aboan, Oroonoko's best friend in Coramantien who helps Oroonoko gain access to Imoinda.. See The Fitzwilliam Museum Collection, Object Number P.2046-1991.

<sup>106</sup> Elizabeth Howe argues that audiences came to see women performing because they were novel, intriguing, and because other people found their offstage lives interesting, which added to their popularity. People want to see or participate in something to be in the know, as it were. Howe, *The First English Actresses*.

<sup>107</sup> Mackerel is a slang term for a bawd or prostitute in seventeenth-century London and was likely given to Betty as a nickname (whose real name may have not been Betty or even Elizabeth—an early example of an actress taking on a "stage" name). Duffet's play characterized the popular drama style of the times and would have been an appropriate role for Betty whose own beginning as an orange girl retained dubious moral implications. The sexual nature of the play itself is made apparent in the play's last act, in which Betty sang Duffet's parody of Ariel's song in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, "Where the bee sucks, there suck I." Betty's version as reimagined by Duffet would have made the lower-class London theatre-goers smile as she sang instead, "Where good ale is, there suck I" and then continues;

In a cobbler's stall I lie  
While the watch are passing by;  
Then about the streets I fly  
After cullies merrily.  
And I merrily, merrily take up my clo'se  
Under the Watch and the Constable's nose.

Cullies are fools or dupes, slang for deceivers or cheaters. As quoted in John Harold Wilson, *Court Satires of the Restoration*, (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1976), 263. *Shakespeare Adaptations, The Tempest, The Mock Tempest, and King Lear*. With an Introduction and Notes by Montague Summers (London: Jonathan Cape, Eleven Gower Street, 1922), 108.

<sup>108</sup> John Phillips, *The History of the Most Renowned Don Quixote of Mancha*, (1687).

<sup>109</sup> Robert Gould, *Love Given O'er: or, a Satyr against the Pride, Lust, and Inconstancy, &c. of Woman* (London: Printed for R. Bentley and J. Tonson, 1690).

<sup>110</sup> An army officer, Member of Parliament and one-time monarchist, Armstrong, “a rogue,” was executed at Tyburn for high treason, convicted of conspiring for the death of the King and his brother the Duke and for “subverting the government of these three kingdoms” in 1684. Although Betty had to endure the ignominy of her lover’s actions, her association with Armstrong ensured her fame. Armstrong was memorialized in a satire, “Satire on Both Whigs and Tories,” about the Rye House Plot published in July, 1683. Although he escaped to Holland, Armstrong was illegally brought back to England and hanged without trial. A brief description of Armstrong exists among other co-conspirators such as the Duke of Monmouth and the Earl of Essex, who slit his own throat three days after being imprisoned in the Tower. See John Harold Wilson, *Court Satires of the Restoration*, (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1976), 122, line 24. Once a strong supporter of Charles II during the Interregnum, Armstrong became involved in the plot to execute the king. He was indicted for high treason in 1683, fled to Cleves, Rotterdam and then Leiden, where he was captured. He was executed on June 20, 1684, his head placed at Westminster Hall, three of his quarters displayed in London, his fourth in Stafford. See Richard L. Greaves, “Armstrong, Sir Thomas (bap. 1633, d. 1684)” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Accessed May 2012. See also, Armstrong, Sir Thomas, *The proceedings against Sir Thomas Armstrong in His Majesties Court of King’s Bench, at Westminster, upon an outlawry for high-treason, &c.: as also an account of what passed at his execution at Tyburn, the 20<sup>th</sup> of June 1684: together with the paper he delivered...* (London: Printed for Robert Horn, John Baker and John Redmayne, 1684).

<sup>111</sup> Lord George de Forest, *A New Collection of Poems Relating to State Affairs, from Oliver Cromwell to This Present Time: By the Greatest Wits of the Age...* [London, 1705], 422. Accessed in Google Books, 16 May 2012:

[http://books.google.nl/books?id=rQw1AAAAMAAJ&pg=PA421&lpg=PA421&dq=%22to+mr+julian%22+poem&source=bl&ots=ovlk42Zlv&sig=vwr2wDgFbq3JiN1r1BgUX2qOEm4&hl=nl&sa=X&ei=T5KET8X\\_NIPW0QH9vMXgBw&ved=0CCIQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=%22to%20mr%20julian%22%20poem&f=false](http://books.google.nl/books?id=rQw1AAAAMAAJ&pg=PA421&lpg=PA421&dq=%22to+mr+julian%22+poem&source=bl&ots=ovlk42Zlv&sig=vwr2wDgFbq3JiN1r1BgUX2qOEm4&hl=nl&sa=X&ei=T5KET8X_NIPW0QH9vMXgBw&ved=0CCIQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=%22to%20mr%20julian%22%20poem&f=false)

<sup>112</sup> Payment for one’s play depended upon the number of performances produced. For example, a play produced over several nights was considered a success. Playwrights received benefit nights (part of the evening’s take) on a performance’s third and sixth night’s.

<sup>113</sup> Samuel Pepys described his first meeting her; “met my Lady Newcastle going with her coaches and footmen all in velvet: herself, whom I never saw before, as I have heard her often described, for all the town-talk is now-a-days of her extravagancies, with her velvet cap, her hair about her ears; many black patches, because of pimples about her mouth; naked-necked, without any thing about it, and a black just-au-corps. She seemed to me a very comely woman: but I hope to see more of her on Mayday.” See Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, <http://www.pepysdiary.com/archive/1667/04/26/> Accessed on 9 October 2012.

<sup>114</sup> Along with Behn, playwrights Delarivier Manley (c 1670-1724) and Eliza Heywood (1693-1756) were called by playwright Reverend James Sterling (fl. 1718-1755) “the fair triumvirate of wit.” Sterling wrote, “Pathetic Behn, or *Manley’s* greater Name; / Forget their Sex, and own when *Haywood* writ, / She clos’d the Fair Triumvirate of Wit.” “Pathetic” here being used by Sterling in the sense of pathos inspiring. Although connected in memory by Sterling’s poetic comment, these three women really represent three distinctive periods of time in theatre, with Behn being the greatest role model for women playwrights of later generations.

See Paul Bunyan Anderson, "Mistress Delarivier Manley's Biography," *Modern Philology*, (February 1936) 33: 261-278. Sterling never made a career out of playwriting and eventually migrated to Maryland around 1740 where he became minister in Kent County. See also Thomas Seccombe, *Dictionary of National Biography, 1885-1900, Volume 54, Stanhope-Stovin*. *The Times*, 26 March 1796, 3.

<sup>115</sup> Robert Gould, *The Play House, a Satyr* (1689) is an exceptional source of information for Restoration theatre historians covering the period 1675-1710. Gould, a competent poet, derides most Restoration actors of the period, including the beloved Thomas Betterton and Elizabeth Barry. For more on Gould and his writings on theatre, see Susan M. Martin, "Robert Gould's Attacks on the London Stage, 1689 and 1709: The Two Versions of 'The Playhouse: A Satyr,'" *Philological Quarterly*, Vol. 82, No. 1, Winter 2003.

<sup>116</sup> Behn wrote in her Preface that she had several men look over her play before she presented it publicly to ensure that her work was worthy of production and not offensive since she had received public censure for her "offensive" work previously; "For the farther Justification of this Play; it being a Comedy of Intrigue Dr. *Davenant* out of Respect to the Commands he had from Court, to take great Care that no Indecency should be in Plays, sent for it and nicely look't it over, putting out anything he but imagin'd the Critics would play with. After that, Sir Roger *L'Estrange* read it and licens'd it, and found no such Faults as 'tis charg'd with: Then Mr. *Killigrew*, who more severe than any, from the strict Order he had, perus'd it with great Circumspection; and lastly the Master Players, who you will I hope in some Measure esteem Judges of Decency and their own Interest, having been so many Years Prentice to the Trade of Judging. I say, after all these Supervisors the Ladys may be convinc'd, they left nothing that could offend, and the Men of their unjust Reflections on so many Judges of Wit and Decencys" See Behn, *The Lucky Chance; or, The Alderman's Bargain*, Preface.

<sup>117</sup> Behn, *The Lucky Chance; or, The Alderman's Bargain*, Preface.

<sup>118</sup> Nicholas Culpeper had eight children, only one of whom survived into adulthood. During the English Civil War, Culpeper published a medical guide in English, *The English Pysician*, (previous texts had all been published in Latin). See O. Thulesius, "Nicholas Culpepe, father of English midwifery," *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* Vol. 87:9 (552-556). See also Angeline Goreau, *Reconstructing Aphra: a social biography of Aphra Behn* (New York: Dial Press, 1980).

<sup>119</sup> Thomas Southerne's adaptation of *Oroonoko* mirrors Behn's novel with the exception of his making the heroine, Imoinda, white instead of black, and thus reflects the love interest bi-racial contrast present in Shakespeare's *Othello*. Southerne choosing to change the race of the heroine suggests that the public was not yet ready to embrace a black heroine. His play also reflects contemporary public tastes for pathos, and still plays with the sexual and comical sub plots that kept audiences coming back.

<sup>120</sup> Behn was rumored to have been a spy for Charles II during the Second Dutch War (1665-1667) though she claimed that Charles II never paid her for her work as a rumored spy. She went into bankruptcy as a result that forced her into debtor's prison, perhaps why she decided to write plays.

<sup>121</sup> *The Rover* was Behn's most successful work during her lifetime. *The Rover, or, The Banish'd Cavaliers Part II* was also produced at The Duke's Theatre, Dorset Gardens. Actresses in the premier production of *Second Part of The Rover* included Mrs. Connor, Mrs. Norris, and Elizabeth Barry as La Nuche, a Spanish courtesan who is in love with "the Rover." Other actresses included Mrs. Price, Mrs. Norris (or Norice) and Mrs. Crofts.

<sup>122</sup> These words are spoken by La Nuche, performed originally by Elizabeth Barry. Behn, *The Rover; or, The Banish'd Cavaliers, Part I and II*, (Accessed on Project Gutenberg, 8 October 2013), 113. See Behn, *The Rover; or, The Banish'd Cavaliers, Part I and II*, (Accessed on Project Gutenberg, 8 October 2013), 177.

<sup>123</sup> James, Duke of York removed himself to Amsterdam in exile in March of 1679, though he returned in August when Charles II became very ill, and finally returned to England in 1682. Behn's dedication reads, "yet You, Great Sir, denying Yourself the Rights and Priviledges the meanest Subject Claims, with a Fortitude worthy Your Adorable Vertues, put Yourself upon a voluntary Exile to appease the causeless

murmurs of this again gathering Faction, who make their needless and self-created fears, an occasion to Play the old Game o're again; whil'st the Politick self-interested and malicious few betray the unconsidering Rest, with the delicious sounds of Liberty and Publick Good; that lucky Cant which so few years since so miserably reduc'd all the Noble, Brave and Honest, to the Obedience of the ill-gotten Power, and worse-acted Greatness of the Rabble; so that whil'st they most unjustly cry'd down the oppression of one of the best of Monarchs, and all Kingly Government: all England found itself deplorably enslav'd by the Arbitrary Tyranny of many Pageant Kings." Behn, *The Rover; or, The Banish'd Cavaliers, Part I and II*, (Accessed on Project Gutenberg, 8 October 2012), 113, 177.

<sup>124</sup> Not all actors felt comfortable taking on political roles. Thomas Betterton, who was a principal performer in the Duke's Company, the acting company where Behn's plays were produced, and his wife, Mary, along with their young charge, Anne Bracegirdle, avoided acting in political plays, believing they were too volatile and too personal for their careers. Instead of publicly displaying their own political opinions, they chose to remain absent and thus neutral. Betterton and his family could abstain from politically charged plays because they were among the most popular performers. But certainly their absence onstage in such works also made a statement of its own. For a more detailed discussion of Betterton, see David Roberts, *Thomas Betterton: The Greatest Actor of the Restoration Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); William A. Armstrong, "The Acting of Thomas Betterton," *English* (1954) 10 (56): 55-57.

<sup>125</sup> The original cast of *The Feign'd Curtizans* included Mary Lee as Laura Lucretia (a young lady of good family intended to marry Julio, but in love with Galliard), Elizabeth Barry as Cornelia (one of Julio's sisters, poses as courtesan by the name Silvianetta), Mrs. Norris as Phillipa (servant woman), Mrs. Seymour as Sabina (friend of Laura) and Mrs. Curren as Marcella (another of Julio's sisters, poses as courtesan by the name Euphemia).

<sup>126</sup> Behn continued to sing Gwyn's praises: "for besides Madam, all the Charms and attractions and powers of your Sex, you have Beauties peculiar to your self, and eternal sweetness, youth and ay [sic], which never dwelt in any face but yours... 'Tis this that ought to make your Sex vain enough to despise the malicious world that will allow a woman no wit, and bless our selves for living in an Age that can produce so wondrous an argument as your undeniable self, to shame those boasting talkers who are Judges of nothing but faults." See Aphra Behn, *The Feign'd Curtizans, or, A Nights Intrigue, A Comedy as it is Acted at the Dukes Theatre* (London: Printed for Jacob Jonson at the Judges Head in Chancery-Lane near Fleet-Street, 1679) A 2-3.

<sup>127</sup> The Beale portrait of Behn (25cm x 20cm) is at St. Hilda's College, Oxford, though the National Portrait Gallery in London claims an engraving in the likeness of this portrait is attributed to Thomas Uwins (1782-1857) over a century after she lived. A second portrait was painted by court painter John Riley (1646-1691), of which several engravings published in 1716 exist in the National Portrait Gallery in London. A pencil sketch of Behn made by George Scharf in 1873 of an image no longer extant includes Behn's physical description as follows: "Eyeballs dark slate, eyebrows dark brown. Hair intensely dark rich brown, no ornaments, very full and hanging over her right shoulder, painted with red-brown shadows and greenish middle tints in the style of Closterman. Very clever and powerful—called, "Mrs. Behn." See the National Portrait Gallery Collection items: NPG D30183, NPG D9483, NPG D30188, NPG D6859. National Portrait Gallery online collections accessed on 8 October 2012.

<sup>128</sup> Anne Bracegirdle wore the headdress in the play, an image of which exists in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. The engraving of Anne Bracegirdle in the role of Indian Queen was made by William Vincent after an original engraving made by engraver John Smith (1712-1776). It is in the Harry R. Beard Collection, Museum No. 1500-2012.

<sup>129</sup> The text in more detail is interesting: "But before I give you the Story of this *Gallant Slave*, 'tis fit I tell you the Manner of bringing them to these new *Colonies*; those they make Use of there, not being *Natives* of the Place: for those we live with in perfect Amity, without daring to command 'em; but, on the contrary, caress 'em with all the brotherly and friendly Affection in the World; trading with them for their Fish, Venison, Buffaloes Skins, and little Rarities; as *Marmosets*, a sort of Monkey, as big as a Rat or

Weasel, but of a marvellous and delicate Shape, having Face and Hands like a Human Creature; and *Cousheries*, a little Beast in the Form and Fashion of a Lion, as big as a Kitten, but so exactly made in all Parts like that Noble Beast, that it is it in *Miniature*: Then for little *Paraketoës*, great *Parrots*, *Muckaws*, and a thousand other Birds and Beasts of wonderful and surprizing Forms, Shapes, and Colours: For Skins of prodigious Snakes, of which there are some three-score Yards in Length; as is the Skin of one that may be seen at his Majesty's *Antiquary's*; where are also some rare Flies, of amazing Forms and Colours, presented to 'em by myself; some as big as my Fist, some less; and all of various Excellencies, such as Art cannot imitate. Then we trade for Feathers, which they order into all Shapes, make themselves little short Habits of 'em, and glorious Wreaths for their Heads, Necks, Arms and Legs, whose Tinctures are unconceivable. I had a Set of these presented to me, and I gave 'em to the *King's Theatre*; it was the Dress of the *Indian Queen*, infinitely admir'd by Persons of Quality; and was inimitable. Besides these, a thousand little Knacks, and Rarities in Nature; and some of Art, as their Baskets, Weapons, Aprons, &c. We dealt with 'em with Beads of all Colours, Knives, Axes, Pins and Needles, which they us'd only as Tools to drill Holes with in their Ears, Noses and Lips, where they hang a great many little Things; as long Beads, Bits of Tin, Brass or Silver beat thin, and any shining Trinket. The Beads they weave into Aprons about a Quarter of an Ell long, and of the same Breadth; working them very prettily in Flowers of several Colours; which Apron they wear just before 'em, as *Adam* and *Eve* did the Fig-leaves; the Men wearing 131a long Stripe of Linen, which they deal with us for. They thread these Beads also on long Cotton-threads, and make Girdles to tie their Aprons to, which come twenty times, or more, about the Waste, and then cross, like a Shoulder-belt, both Ways, and round their Necks, Arms and Legs. This Adornment, with their long black Hair, and the Face painted in little Specks or Flowers here and there, makes 'em a wonderful Figure to behold. Some of the Beauties, which indeed are finely shap'd, as almost all are, and who have pretty Features, are charming and novel; for they have all that is called Beauty, except the Colour, which is a reddish Yellow; or after a new Oiling, which they often use to themselves, they are of the Colour of a new Brick, but smooth, soft and sleek. They are extreme modest and bashful, very shy, and nice of being touch'd. And tho' they are all thus naked, if one lives for ever among 'em, there is not to be seen an indecent Action, or Glance: and being continually us'd to see one another so unadorn'd, so like our first Parents before the Fall, it seems as if they had no Wishes, there being nothing to heighten Curiosity: but all you can see, you see at once, and every Moment see; and where there is no Novelty, there can be no Curiosity. Not but I have seen a handsome young *Indian*, dying for Love of a very beautiful young *Indian* Maid; but all his Courtship was, to fold his Arms, pursue her with his Eyes, and Sighs were all his Language: While she, as if no such Lover were present, or rather as if she desired none such, carefully guarded her Eyes from beholding him; and never approach'd him, but she looked down with all the blushing Modesty I have seen in the most Severe and Cautious of our World. And these People represented to me an absolute *Idea* of the first State of Innocence, before Man knew how to sin: And 'tis most evident and plain, that simple Nature is the most harmless, inoffensive and virtuous Mistress. 'Tis she alone, if she were permitted, that better instructs the 132World, than all the Inventions of Man: Religion would here but destroy that Tranquillity they possess by Ignorance; and Laws would but teach 'em to know Offences, of which now they have no Notion." Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko, or, The Royal Slave in The Works of Aphra Behn, Vol. V* (London: William Heinemann, 1915), 130-131.  
<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/29854/29854-h/29854-h.htm#oroonoko> Accessed 12 November 2015.

<sup>130</sup> Playwright and poet Thomas Shadwell (1642-1692) wrote a satire on the general nature of Tories in *A Lenten prologue refus'd by the players* (1682/3), which further suggests the volatile environment in which Behn was writing and the advantages players and playwrights had in performing "news." Shadwell remarked; "But Plots, and Parties give new matter birth; / And State Distractions leave you here for mirth!...The Stage like Pulpits is become / The Scene of News, a furious Party's Drum." This was not the first time that contemporary political or social strife was aired onstage, and it certainly would not be the last. The very public platform on which actors spoke the words of another created an imagined world in which the audience could actively take part in the hissing, booing and clapping for certain political groups to show either their disdain or their support. Thomas Shadwell, *A Lenten Prologue Refus'd by the Players*, in the collection of the National Library of Scotland, <http://digital.nls.uk/english-ballads/pageturner.cfm?id=74895547&mode=transcription>. Accessed 10 October 2012.

<sup>131</sup> F. P. Lock, *Susanna Centlivre* (Woodbridge, CT: Twayne Publishers, 1979), 14.

<sup>132</sup> It is said that Centlivre was given breeches roles because of her appearance, including a “small Wen on her left Eye lid, which gave her a Masculine Air.” See John Bowyer, *The Celebrated Mrs Centlivre* (Durham, NC: Duke University Publications, 1952), 11-12.

<sup>133</sup> Her stepfather soon remarried after her mother’s death and Centlivre suffered abuse from this new wife and by age fifteen, she had left home. There are two variations of how she came to join the theatre. One story by biographer John Mottley (1692-1750) suggests that Centlivre was found despondent by the side of a road by a Cambridge University student, Anthony Hammond. Hammond fell in love with the beautiful young woman and disguised her as his male cousin, Jack, in order to smuggle her into his rooms. There, it is said, Centlivre did a little learning and picked up some basic education before making her way to London. The other story by London bookseller and contemporary biographer W. R. Chetwood (fl. 1722-1749), is a little less dramatic and suggests that Centlivre followed a band of traveling players to Stamford where she first began her acting career.

<sup>134</sup> Bowyer, *The Celebrated Mrs. Centlivre*, 92-93.

<sup>135</sup> The royal cook, Joseph Centlivre became enamored of Susanna and soon asked her to marry him. They lived in Buckingham Court until her death on December 1, 1723.

<sup>136</sup> *The Busie Body* was produced for eighty-seven of a possible ninety one years through 1800. *A Bold Stroke for a Wife*, Centlivre’s second most popular play saw production in seventy-five or a possible eighty-two years before 1800, and *The Wonder* was staged for fifty-three years out of a possible eighty-six years during the eighteenth century. A close second behind Centlivre in play popularity for women playwrights was Behn; her comedy, *The Rover* (1677) and her farce *Emperor of the Moon* being the next most popularly produced plays of the eighteenth century that were written by women.

<sup>137</sup> In fact, Centlivre’s *The Busie Body* was staged every year between 1770-1785 and then again every year from 1791-1800. It was also published in 1771, 1774, 1776, 1777 (2 editions), 1779, 1782, 1787, 1791 and 1797.

<sup>138</sup> Of the twenty most popular plays by women that were performed during the eighteenth century, sixteen were comedies, two were farces (a subset of the comic form) and two were operas. Clearly the most popular genre for women playwrights of the period appears to have been comedy. Of the fifty-three most popular plays written by women performed during the eighteenth century (a scale determined by the total number of years each play appeared and was performed), only seven of these plays were tragedies (with three of these being defined as tragic-comedies), and four were operas (with one being defined a comic-opera). The rest of the plays fit into the category of comedy. This selection of plays suggests the idea that the genre with which women felt most comfortable was comedy, perhaps because they were most popular with audiences and thus easier to stage, or perhaps simply because they preferred writing in this style.

<sup>139</sup> *The Works of the Celebrated Mrs. Centlivre* (London: J. Knapton, C. Hitch and L. Hawes, 1790), iii.

<sup>140</sup> Susanna Centlivre, *The Platonick Lady. A Comedy. As it is acted at the Queens Theatre in the Hay-Market. By the author of The gamester, and Love’s Contrivance* (London: Printed for James Knapton, at the Crown in St. Paul’s Church-Yard, 1707).

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Suz-Anne Kinney, “*The Rover* and *The Busie Body*,” in *Look Who’s Laughing: Gender and Comedy*, ed. Gail Finney, *Studies in Humor and Gender*, Vol. 1 (Langhorne, PA: Gordon and Breech Science Publishers, 1994), 95-96.

<sup>143</sup> Bowyer, *The Celebrated Mrs. Centlivre*, 25.

<sup>144</sup> Centlivre’s parents had both been parliamentarians and Centlivre followed suit commenting against Tory views. Indeed, the Court Whigs commanded great power from 1714 to 1760 (much of this time under

Sir Robert Walpole (whose mistress and later wife, Maria Skerritt (1702-1738), was later alluded to as Polly in John Gay's wildly popular work, *The Beggar's Opera* (1728).

<sup>145</sup> Susanna Centlivre, *The Wonder: A Woman Keeps a Secret. A Comedy. As it is Acted at the Theatre Royal in Drury-Lane. By Her Majesty's Servants. Written by the Author of the Gamester* (London: Printed for E. Curll, at the Dial and Bible, against St. Dunstan's Church in Fleet Street, and A. Bettesworth at the Red Lion, on London Bridge, 1714), Dedication.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid*, Dedication.

<sup>147</sup> Centlivre's play was a highly politicized play that Centlivre dedicated to Philip, Marquess and Duke of Wharton. Interestingly, Wharton became an important Jacobite politician whom George I made the Duke of Wharton 1718, when he was just twenty years old, in an effort to smooth the conflicts between Jacobites and Whigs. Wharton's father, ironically, had been a Whig suggesting political malleability between generations in the eighteenth century.

<sup>148</sup> Wiltenburg's study suggests that women writers responded to their environment and that their public engagement resulted in misogynistic responses in pamphlets, broadsides and poetry that were publicly scattered about in an effort to damage the reputation of these "public" women. Thus, according to Wiltenburg, it was in response to these feelings of repression and antagonism that women began writing in order to attempt to change their future. Yet this works argues that women did not become playwrights simply because they wished to change their world, rather they became playwrights because doing so afforded them opportunities both for monetary success and for social recognition. Joy Wiltenburg, *Disorderly Women and Female Power in the Street Literature of Early Modern England and Germany* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1992).

<sup>149</sup> Between 1700 and 1737, a general increase in literacy amongst the middling and poorer classes in England gave women playwrights the opportunity to write for a wider audience with more varied interests. For example, Centlivre writing at the beginning of the eighteenth century could expect her readers to come from a greater variety of backgrounds than Behn could, writing during the last decades of the seventeenth century.

<sup>150</sup> Behn also wrote *The Roundheads, or The Good Old Cause* (1682), a political work produced at the Duke of York's Theatre when the king and Parliament were in conflict and social unrest was felt keenly everywhere.<sup>150</sup> Behn's Catholic sympathies appeared in the dedication of *The Second Part of The Rover, or, The Banish'd Cavaliers* (1681) to Charles II's Catholic brother, James II, Duke of York<sup>150</sup> and also appear in her comedy, *The Feign'd Curtizans* (1679), which is set during the time of the Popish Plot.

<sup>151</sup> It is said that Centlivre was given breeches roles because of her appearance, including a "small Wen on her left Eye lid, which gave her a Masculine Air." See Bowyer, *The Celebrated Mrs Centlivre*, 12.

<sup>152</sup> Suz-Anne Kinney, "The Rover and The Busie Body," in *Look Who's Laughing: Gender and Comedy*, ed. Gail Finney, Studies in Humor and Gender, Vol. 1 (Langhorne, PA: Gordon and Breech Science Publishers, 1994), 95-96.

<sup>153</sup> Centlivre's Prologue also called attention to her position as a woman and suggested power in a woman's humility; "At her Reflections none can be uneasy, / When the kind Creature does her best to please / Humbly she sues, and 'tis not for your Glory / T'insult a Lady—when she falls before ye... Whate'er's her Fate, she's sure to gain the Field / For Women always conquer, when they yield." Susanna Centlivre, *Drawn from the Works of the Celebrated Mrs. Centlivre, Volume One* (London: Printed for J. Knapton, C. Hitch and L. Hawes, 1761), Prologue.

<sup>154</sup> From Susanna Centlivre, *The Perjur'd Husband*, Act V, Scene II:

"Here with Sword in Hand  
I'll wait his coming, [*Draws*.  
And as he enters, pierce thy haughty Breast.  
I know he loves thee, and therefore 'tis brave

Revenge to let him see thy dying Pangs:  
Thy parting Sighs will rack him worse than Hell.”

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid. Placentia, with feminine resolution, forgives her husband, “Rise, my Lord, rise; Do not indulge your Woe; / Your Signs atone for all and make e’en Death a pleasure”.

<sup>158</sup> While all of this is going on, of course, the married Lady Pizalta has a little dalliance with Ludvico, a gigolo.

<sup>159</sup> Susanna Centlivre, *Drawn from the Works of the Celebrated Mrs. Centlivre, Volume One*, Prologue.

<sup>160</sup> Likewise, women of this early period, once they were given an open window into the world of theatre, also become theatre managers, though they did so far less often than men. Lady Mary D’Avenant is likely to have been the first female theatre manager. She took over the management of the Duke’s Company upon the death of her husband, William D’Avenant, in 1695; her eldest son who rose to become a Tory Member of Parliament, Charles D’Avenant took over running the theatre with her. Charlotte Charke (1713-1760) became manager of the Little Theatre in Haymarket, following Henry Fielding.

<sup>161</sup> After 1737, the number of new plays written in England by both women and men declined dramatically until the last quarter of the eighteenth century, with most “new” plays simply being revisions of older, previously approved performances. Ultimately, however, these Theatre Licensing Act restrictions did the opposite of what it might have intended and instead of regulating plays, they opened up theatre more broadly to non-patent theatres that staged burlesques, pantomimes, operas, musicals, and eventually melodramas. By incorporating music into productions, performances were not considered “plays” and were not subject to the Theatre Licensing Act. Because only “patent” or legitimate theatres were allowed to perform spoken dramas, non-patent or non-licensed theatres (such as the Theatre at Lincoln’s Inn Fields) produced what became known as “illegitimate theatre” by incorporating music into burlesques, ballets, melodramas and ballad operas. This tradition of introducing music into plays continued in performances taken across the Atlantic to America.

## CHAPTER 3

### EARLY AMERICAN THEATRE (1752-1772)

#### Chapter Summary

Anglophone theatre had long served as a place where various members of British society gathered. It provided audiences with a community in which to share in public discussions of social and political events that in turn helped people throughout Britain and the transatlantic region remain connected. Politically contentious plays performed in Britain during the first three decades of the eighteenth century resulted in Parliament passing the Theatre Licensing Act of 1737, which essentially returned theatre to censorship.<sup>1</sup> Yet even if Anglophone playwrights did not create a substantially new repertoire between 1752 and 1772, other important innovations appeared that resulted in significant changes to theatre, including changes in the economic and practical world that shaped theatre.

While theatre had reestablished itself in England during the Restoration era and actresses and women playwrights had successfully launched themselves into the public arena as influential, creative, and talented celebrities who influenced the shape and style of theatre, Anglophone theatre outside of Britain was much more tenuous. In fact, the critical mass of support for theatre did not appear in Middle Atlantic, Southern, and urban regions in colonial America until around 1750, almost a century later than it had taken hold in England following Cromwell's socially restrictive government. By the middle of the eighteenth century, interest in and acceptance of theater began to spread in the Americas. The growing celebrity status of actresses and women playwrights involved them more directly with cultural diplomacy and cultural discourse as they traveled transatlantically and transnationally. Women's plays became part of the regularly performed repertoire throughout the transatlantic world, and actresses drew audiences and provided them with lessons in contemporary British culture—in essence teaching American colonists and non-Anglo audiences what it meant to be British.<sup>2</sup>

The population growth and increasing economic success of colonists in colonial America and the British Caribbean provided an environment in which Anglophone theatre could thrive and led to the establishment of transatlantic acting troupes.<sup>3</sup> As performance historian Miles P. Grier argues, the study of theatre's significance in understanding economic, political, and social history "would show the ways that cultural mythology enabled the British approach to the eighteenth-century struggles that scholars study" and furthermore that "Theatre—and the broader field of ritualized action and interpretation to which it belongs—offered the tantalizing hope that stock characters were not confined to the imagination but could assumed flesh and interact in the world."<sup>4</sup> While the British Caribbean and other "exotic" locations were often misleadingly portrayed on the English stage, these settings served an important if somewhat marginalized purpose in developing theater itself. Hearing about the popularity of John Moody's Jamaican Company (Moody went to Jamaica in 1745 at the time of the Jacobite rising and returned to England in 1759) prompted William and Lewis Hallam to take their own group of theatrical professionals to America and the British Caribbean in 1752. The strolling players and puppeteers who traveled to and through the Caribbean used the West Indies as a theatrical "retreat," where they could recruit performers, practice productions, and escape negative political climates.<sup>5</sup> When Lewis Hallam wanted to recruit new performers for his troupe he traveled to Jamaica in 1754, where he promptly died, and David Douglass took over as manager. When the American Company now under management by Lewis Hallam Jr. (Hallam's London Company of Comedians had been renamed the American Company by Douglass in the 1760s) were effectively driven out of America after the Continental Congress passed a law prohibiting staged plays, they built the Kingston Theatre in Jamaica in 1774, where they remained producing plays for the next decade. It is likely this "temporary" ten-year move to Jamaica forced Hallam's group to reassess their allegiance either to Britain, to which they were culturally connected, or to America, where their loyalties may now (after almost two decades performing on American stages) have become more politically and culturally aligned.<sup>6</sup>

By the mid-eighteenth century trade of all kinds and migration (forced and voluntary) resulted in an Anglophone world that was economically and culturally interconnected.<sup>7</sup> As a result, consumerism consumed America during the last half of the century. Theatre through performance and publication became a significant contributor to cultural diplomacy and like other modes of entertainment and cultural engagement like newspapers and coffee houses, became more widely available to and was increasingly accepted by American colonists. Daniel O'Quinn argues the importance of the interconnectedness of newspapers and theatre with socialization stating, "Newspapers reported on the political news of the day, dutifully advertised and reviewed plays, discussed the world of business, and tracked down social scandal" and further that newspapers discussed audience response to performances and "the public space of the theatre had become a site not only for modeling but also for regulating social practice."<sup>8</sup> Grier posits, "For those enthralled by dreams of empire, performance culture mediated perceptions of real events, enabling them to imagine characters whose behavior could always be predicated by an imperial script."<sup>9</sup>

Actors (I use this term here to include all stage performers regardless of gender or age) had long been a public voice for conveying important social, political and cultural ideas and events, contentious and otherwise and through the cultural exchange of theatre these performers voiced an imagined shared British identity constructed through an (imagined) imperial agenda. The appearance of actresses onstage fed this American colonial need to "consume," which translated in theatre to the desire to experience a celebrity performance, share in the experience (through performance) of what it meant to identify as British, and, if one stretches the point, even experience being consumed by passions that the performance or performers evoked. When, for example, the London Company of Comedians staged Shakespeare's *Othello* at the request of Virginia Governor, Robert Dinwiddie when he entertained a Cherokee delegation, their choice of *Othello* calls into question the use of racially imperialistic views that may have been embraced more by the recently-arrived players than understood by local colonial inhabitants who had more

experience with multi-cultural exchanges, particularly with Indians, enslaved and free Africans, French traders, and Dutch merchants. As O'Quinn argues, "theatre was as much about the social experience of audience interaction as it was about the consumption of a particular performance. This is most obvious when the theatre erupted into violence either aimed at the production itself, or, more routinely, among the audience."<sup>10</sup> Thus the London Company seems to have projected racially imperialistic views (either covertly as widely accepted London ideology, or overtly, as they faced their racially disparate audience), as an important moment of cultural and imperial diplomacy.<sup>11</sup>

Indeed, Grier points out that in Othello's suicide scene, he calls himself a "base Indian [who] threw a pearl away / Richer than all his tribe" and thus the Indians in the audience are actually drawn into the play's scene inadvertently or otherwise by the Anglo audience who may have thought similarly of their guests in Shakespeare's allusion to the wasteful Indian.<sup>12</sup> Grier sees the projection by Anglo audiences of the literal-mindedness of Indians reinforced by commentary on trade (as practiced by Virginia Governor Dinwiddie for example) and the need for symbolic representation (rather than abstractions) in trade negotiations.<sup>13</sup> Kathleen Wilson suggests that understanding performance is important to recognizing Anglo-colonial social and political relationships enacted within the eighteenth-century transatlantic world.<sup>14</sup> Historian Jeffrey H. Richards believes that these ethnic types were portrayed onstage "with gross inaccuracies, measured against flesh-and blood" characters who often sat in the audience and thus the Cherokee entourage visiting Williamsburg at the invitation of Governor Dinwiddie might themselves become identified by the Anglo audience with the "dull Moor" as Emilia calls Othello in the final act of the play.<sup>15</sup>

American theatre historian Odai Johnson argues that theatre in America did not represent its diverse and racially mixed population but rather presented (or projected) an imperialistic and metropolitan view better understood by London audiences.<sup>16</sup> This claim might be valid in the middle of the eighteenth century, but during the last three decades, eighteenth-century theatre in

America began to feature “American” characters who helped shape a cohesive American national identity. These “American” plays included Major Robert Rogers’s 1766 tragedy *Ponteach, or, The Savages of America: a tragedy*; Thomas Godfrey’s 1767 tragedy, *The Prince of Parthia*; Mercy Otis Warren’s polemical plays published during the American Revolution, the first staged play written by an American, Royall Tyler’s *The Contrast* (1787), Susanna Rowson’s contemporary commentary on the capture and enslavement of American citizens by Algerian pirates in *Slaves in Algiers* (1794), and the forceful if Europeanized portrayal of Chief Tammany in Ann Julia Kemble Hatton’s opera, *Tammany or, the Indian Chief* (1794). Significantly, women playwrights were among the first authors in America to include these nationally identifiable character types. Additionally, because of the scarcity of new material to perform, these new plays with new “American” characters provided an important form of transcolonial/interstate cultural diplomacy that seems uniquely American in both origin and style. A traditionally British cultural art form, theatre, became employed as a way in which Americans loosened the imperial hold Britain had on the former colonies and allowed them to begin defining themselves.

Arguing for a consumer “revolution” that emerged by the 1770s, T. H. Breen contends that “what gave the American Revolution distinctive shape was an earlier transformation of the Anglo-American consumer marketplace.”<sup>17</sup> Breen further asserts,

[t]he key element in this mid-eighteenth-century transformation might be best termed the invention of choice...British imports offered American colonists genuine alternatives, real possibilities to fashion themselves in innovative ways. After the 1740s they began articulating status and beauty through choice; it affected the character of relations within family and community.<sup>18</sup>

Soon after their arrival in November 1752, the London Company of Comedians, the first company comprised of professional theatre performers to tour colonial America, performed Shakespeare’s *Othello* in front of a Cherokee delegation, including Cherokee leader Amouskositte, then in early trade negotiations with Virginian Governor Robert Dinwiddie, suggesting how Anglophone theatre became an important cultural and diplomatic tool in eighteenth-century America.

This chapter establishes why American theatre became viable and influential during its formative years (1752-1772) by examining early American actors and performances. Ultimately this chapter argues that cultural discourse and diplomacy thrived in transatlantic Anglophone playhouses during the second half of the eighteenth century, especially as theatre began to be seen as morally responsible.<sup>19</sup> Theatre provided a variety of American residents with a social way to connect culturally in an imagined if not completely neutral space. Actress performances and popular British plays, I argue, provided a unique way in which British actors, American colonials and Native populations engaged in cultural, social and political exchanges within a community or shared experience.<sup>20</sup> This chapter argues that eighteenth-century Anglophone theatre in America served as a unique diplomatic tool, that both taught various cultures about Anglo culture and suggested to these various groups (including colonial Americans) how Britain expected them to act. Thus, I argue, the first actresses in America were integral in establishing significant and influential cultural exchanges between British performers, the government leaders who hired them to perform, and the various and culturally diverse audiences for whom they performed.

My work also seeks to understand the economic forces that allowed Anglophone theatre to thrive in colonial America beginning in 1752. In addition, I examine regressive forces working against theatre, including colonial American moral reticence and issues with theatre licensing in Britain that challenged transatlantic theatre troupes. I first present an overview of three pioneering American theatre companies in order of their appearance on the American stage: the Murray-Kean Company, Robert Upton, and Lewis Hallam's London Company of Comedians. Then I examine the recognizable moment when professional theatre was established in America in 1752 when Lewis Hallam's acting company arrived in Virginia. Within weeks of their arrival Virginia Governor Robert Dinwiddie used Hallam's Company and theatre more generally to engage in cultural diplomacy with important Cherokee leaders. I also present a momentous cultural interaction between Anglo-performers and Cherokees and follow the progress and performances

of David Douglass's American Company, the company formed from the London Company of Comedians after Lewis Hallam's death in Jamaica.

In order to understand how economic and practical dynamics encouraged, promoted and helped define cultural exchanges within transatlantic Anglophone theatre, this chapter steps back from its discussion of theatre participants to explore the physical space of the eighteenth-century American playhouse, and the costs involved with maintaining a theatre company in America during the last half of the eighteenth century. After exploring the physical spaces of American theatre, I return once again to the players themselves in order to discuss a case study of American theatrical diplomacy when Lewis Hallam's Company of Comedians presents *Othello* for Virginia Governor Robert Dinwiddie and his Cherokee guests. Examining the establishment of professional theatre in America and its cultural, political and social roots allows gives a solid foundation for examining how women involved with Anglophone theatre grew to become celebrities and engaging cultural diplomats who helped to introduce and present social, cultural, and even political conversations in the transatlantic Anglophone world.

Between 1752 and 1772, several significant theatre-related events shaped the voice of theatre in America, including the staging of *Othello* in Williamsburg in 1752 for the Cherokee, the renaming of the London Company of Comedians to the American Company in 1763, the performance of Cherokee warriors onstage in New York in 1767, and the construction of permanent theatre structures in Williamsburg, New York and Philadelphia. These events, combined with the popularity of actresses to draw audiences, cumulatively suggest that theatre in America was not going away. More importantly, these events reveal that Anglophone theatre, while initially a form of British cultural influence, would become essential in helping a myriad of culturally disparate groups to temporarily come together in a shared and very public cultural experience. In addition, Anglophone theatre allowed Britain and America to negotiate cultural diplomacy between themselves as independent yet connected entities just as it assisted in

negotiations between colonists and natives as political tensions between colonial America and Britain mounted.

### **Early American Theatre Companies**

Three theatre companies helped successfully launch theatre in eighteenth-century America: the Murray-Kean Company managed by Walter Murray and Thomas Kean, the London Company of Comedians managed by Lewis Hallam, Sr., and the American Company managed by David Douglass and later by Lewis Hallam, Jr. The Murray-Kean Company, composed of both semi-professional players and amateurs, performed actively in colonial America during the late 1740s and early 1750s, traveling from South Carolina through New York. Their behavior at times infuriated local government officials as they fought against economic and religious forces that threatened to undermine their legitimacy and their income. Yet they managed to establish a toe-hold in America primarily because Anglo audiences wanted to stay connected to British culture. The Murray-Kean Company laid the groundwork for legitimate theatre by familiarizing American audiences with the idea that theatre could be as socially and morally accountable as it was entertaining.

In 1752, Lewis Hallam's company of eighteen performers—adults and children—arrived in Virginia. Hallam's players, unlike the Murray-Kean Company, were comprised of professional performers from Britain and Ireland who made the transatlantic passage for the sole purpose of touring in America and in the British Caribbean.<sup>21</sup> Theatre in Jamaica was already ahead of American theatre by 1752, beginning with the first "Publick Theatre" in 1682 located either in Spanish Town or Port Royal, and more recently with the ever-popular company of John Moody David Douglass.<sup>22</sup>

Unfortunately for these groups of traveling thespians, during the 1760s and 1770s theatre in America suffered the consequences of remaining too culturally (and thus symbolically) connected to Britain in the years leading up to the American Revolution. On 11 May 1766, an

angry mob incited by the New York Sons of Liberty learned of the repeal of the Stamp Act. Recognizing theatre as a sign of British oppression, they attacked audience and performers alike inside the Beekman Street Theatre in New York while David Douglass and his American Company performed. In their fervor, they beat actors, accidentally killed a child, and reduced the theatre to rubble.<sup>23</sup> In October 1774 in an effort to establish economic independence from Britain, the First Continental Congress officially banned theatre, a point that will be discussed later in this study.<sup>24</sup> The company, temporarily under the management of David Douglass, removed themselves once again to Jamaica where Douglass retired from further theatrical involvement and took up his pre-theatrical occupation in the printing business. Lewis Hallam, Jr. and John Henry, both principals in the company at this time, took over as theatre managers. The American Company remained in Jamaica performing, recruiting, and training additional actors for their company until they returned to New York at the end of the American Revolution in 1783 when the theatre ban was revoked.

Looking closely at the dynamics of these three companies of traveling colonial American performers, the Murray-Kean Company, Lewis Hallam's London Company of Comedians, and David Douglass's American Company demonstrates the various strategies these companies employed to promote their performances. In addition this chapter examines audience response, the importance theatre played in crafting cultural diplomacy that forged bonds with native populations and maintained ties with Britain and the British Caribbean, and the role women played as performers and as growing celebrities who helped to establish these important cultural bonds within the Anglophone transatlantic world.

### **Murray-Kean Company and Itinerate Performers**

Theatre in America is as defined by its performers and plays as it is by the spaces theatre companies occupied. Before American theater could really be called legitimate it had to

have permanent or semi-permanent structures that suggested touring company's commitment to staging performances and audience commitment in wanting to attend them. One of the first important structures built specifically for theatrical performances was constructed in Williamsburg, Virginia on the eve of the London Company's arrival in America. This building was important because it suggests that American audiences were large enough and interested enough in public entertainments, and that theatre managers and performers recognized this growing interest in theatre and were willing to stake their own significant financial and personal investments in this venture.

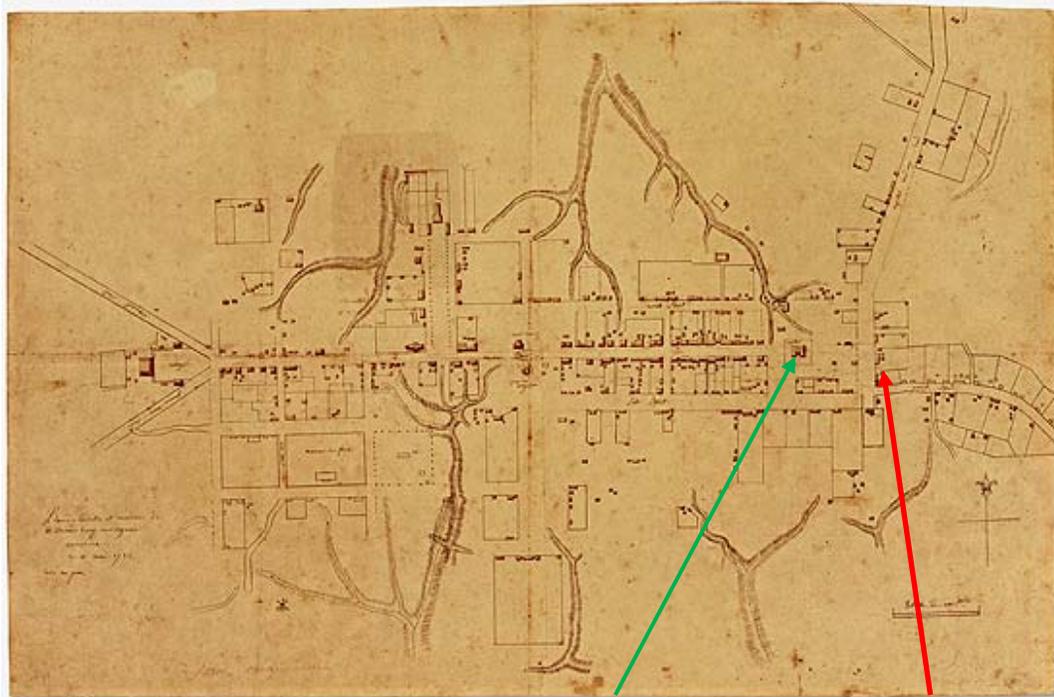


Figure 3.1. Map of Colonial Williamsburg. The Frenchman's Map, 1786. Courtesy of Special Collections Research Center, Swem Library, College of William and Mary. The site of the theatre built in 1716 is highlighted by the green arrow. The site of the theatre built in 1751 is highlighted by the red arrow.

In September 1751, Alexander Finnie purchased two lots in Williamsburg, Virginia, from Benjamin Waller and placed an advertisement in the *Virginia Gazette* requesting the public take out subscriptions to support the building of a theatre. The lots were located at the east end of town on Waller Street behind the Capitol as a replacement for another structure, originally built as a theatre in 1716 but recently purchased by the city of Williamsburg to use as a courthouse,

known as Hustings Court.<sup>25</sup> In fact, knowing the riskiness of such an investment, Alexander Finnie placed an announcement in the *Virginia Gazette* even before the land was purchased from Benjamin Waller in early September 1751; “Whereas the Company of Comedians that are in *New-York* [the Murray-Kean Company] intend performing in this City; but there being no Room suitable for a PLAY-HOUSE, ‘tis propos’d that a THEATRE shall be built by Way of Subscription. [each subscriber] advancing a Pistole,<sup>26</sup> to be entitled to a Box Ticket, for the first Night’s Diversion.”<sup>27</sup> The advertisement ended with the notice of a quick construction time, stating that “The House to be completed by October Court.”<sup>28</sup> Four weeks later, another advertisement appeared in the *Virginia Gazette* announcing,

By Permission of His Honour, the President, On Monday, the 21<sup>st</sup> of October next, will be performed at the new Theatre, in *Williamsburg*, the Tragical History of King Richard the Third, to which will be added a Great Tragical Dance; composed by Monsieur Denoyer, called The Royal Captive, after the *Turkish Manner*, as perform’d at His Majesty’s Opera House, in the Haymarket.<sup>29</sup>

This advertisement with various font sizes and attention-getting indentations appeared in the *Virginia Gazette* on 17 October 1751 repeating this announcement of the performance on 21 October and establishing prices for differentiated seating. The advertisement also reinforced the recent custom that “No person to be admitted behind the Scene” reminding members of the audience that they were not permitted onstage, consistent with contemporary London practices.<sup>30</sup> This non-privileging of audience members with seats onstage suggests a slightly more egalitarian theatre-setting in America as well as the idea that audience members did not wish to be mistaken for part of the act themselves. A week before the first performance in this new theatre, another advertisement appeared again asking for investors to help pay expenses because costs were “at a greater Expense than they at first expected in erecting a Theatre” and because the acting company needed “to procure Scenes and Dresses.”<sup>31</sup>

The first performance in this new permanent structure took place on 21 October 1751 with the semi-professional company of Walter Murray and Thomas Kean performing

Shakespeare's *Richard III*.<sup>32</sup> Kean had performed professionally at London's Drury Lane Theatre, but left England for an American adventure as early as 1714. At some point during his travels he met Murray with whom he started a small acting troupe in 1749.<sup>33</sup> The company first performed under the name the Murray-Kean Company in 1750 in Philadelphia and New York before traveling south to Williamsburg, Virginia for the winter season. The Murray-Kean Company included at least five women on record: Mrs. Taylor, Widow Osborne, Mrs. Becceley (singing actress), Mrs. Tremaine (wife of cabinetmaker John Tremaine) and by December 1751, they had temporarily added Mrs. Robert Upton. While the majority of performers are believed were likely from England, Nancy George, a young woman from Philadelphia, also joined the group. She was the only player identified by name as performing with the company for their entire Philadelphia season from August 1749 to January 1750, perhaps to draw in a local audience who might have been interested to see local talent onstage.<sup>34</sup> The Murray-Kean Company performed in Williamsburg one last time during the 1750/1751 season, departing just a few months shy of the arrival of Lewis Hallam's London Company of Comedians in June 1752.

In Williamsburg, while Finnie might have been the owner of the theatre's physical structure officially, the theatre company was also responsible for helping the business remain profitable. Running a theatre company was risky, particularly when theatre was still questioned on moral grounds. On 24 October 1751, another announcement appeared in the *Virginia Gazette*, again appealing to Williamsburg residents for financial support;

The Company of Comedians having been at a greater Expence [sic] than they at first expected in erecting a THEATRE in the City of *Williamsburg*, and having an immediate Occasion for the Money expended in that Particular, in Order to procure proper Scenes and Dresses, humbly hope that those Gentlemen who are Lovers of theatrical Performances, will be kind enough to assist them, by Way of Subscription...Their most obliged humble Servants, Charles Somerset Woodham, Walter Murray, Thomas Kean.<sup>35</sup>

Without sustained financial support from Williamsburg residents, the Murray-Kean Company floundered. It remained in Williamsburg only through spring of 1752 and oral tradition states that they departed with significant debts. Advertisements for the company's final performances

appeared on 17 April 1752 in the *Virginia Gazette* for a performance of George Farquhar's *The Constant Couple; or, A Trip to Jubilee* (1700) to take place on 24 April, for the benefit of Mrs. Becceley. The play was to be supported by "singing between the Acts" and was accompanied by "a Dance, called the DRUNKEN PEASANT. To which will be added a Farce, called the LYING VALET."<sup>36</sup> On 30 April another advertisement announced their departure and asked for the continued "favour" of Williamsburg residents as they played locally in Hobb's-Hole for their final performance, after which they then progressed onward to Fredericksburg "to play during the Continuance of June Fair."<sup>37</sup>

Certainly financial struggle threatened the viability of theatre companies in America and while financial difficulties shortened their stay in Williamsburg, the Murray-Kean Company laid the groundwork for the social acceptability of theatrical performances in America and made local populations see the potential need for permanent theatre structures. As a result of the Murray-Kean Company's performances and (mostly positive) reputation, residents in towns and cities large enough to support acting companies began to accept, even invite traveling performers into their communities by the time Hallam's Company arrived. And while residents in these locations did not universally embrace theatre companies with open arms, neither did they run them out of town. The age of the American stage had begun.

### **Robert Upton**

In 1751, Robert Upton, an actor of average talent, was employed by William and Lewis Hallam to investigate the possibility of starting a professional acting company for the sole purpose of touring British North America. While Upton's presence as performer or theatre manager in America made little difference to American theatre in and of itself, he is worth noting because of his connection to Hallam's London Company of Comedians and the initial decision to establish professional theatre in America. Unfortunately, the Hallams showed poor judgment in

choosing Upton, who, once he arrived in America, seemed to forget his purpose as theatre scout and instead joined players in the Murray-Kean Company. After a short time appearing with the Murray-Kean Company, Upton attempted to form his own company rather than investigate potential opportunities as he had been hired to do. Not only did he ignore the purpose in which he was sent, he also spent the money given him by the Hallams on himself. Upton's absconding with funds and refusal to report back caused a temporary setback in William Hallam's London Company venture.

By 1750, word arrived in London of the success of the Jamaican acting company formed by British actor and theatre manager John Moody (1727-1812). For about ten years Moody managed a legitimate and successful acting company in Jamaica before his eventual return to London to David Garrick's Drury Lane Theatre. Moody's success in the British West Indies caught the attention of William Hallam (1712-1758), theatre manager of London's Goodman's Fields Theatre. Hallam developed the idea of forming an acting company and sending it across the Atlantic to colonial America. He cobbled together a troupe (mostly relations and in-laws) from the remnants of two locations: his own unlicensed theatre group at the Goodman's Fields and from traveling performances set up at booths nearby in surrounding London fairs. His brother, Lewis Hallam, Sr. (an actor of varying talents who often sidelined himself from performances once he got to America) and Lewis's wife, Mrs. Hallam (the company's premier actress and who performed with the company transatlantically for over two decades), were not surprisingly among the London Company's first recruits.

Before committing financially to such a large and risky investment, however, William Hallam wisely thought to send someone ahead to set up relations with local governmental officials who were responsible for handing out performing licenses, locate appropriate theatre spaces, and begin marketing to drum up potential audience interest. Hallam's choice of agent was a part-time London actor by the name of Robert Upton, who, "assented, and was at vast expense to procure scenes, cloaths, people, etc" to prepare for the journey.<sup>38</sup> According to later accounts

given by Lewis Hallam, Upton traveled to New York in October 1750, after he was “advanced no inconsiderable sum” by William Hallam “to obtain permission to perform, erect a building, and settle everything” against the arrival of the London Company of Comedians.<sup>39</sup> Although Upton’s initial commitment to help William Hallam seems to have begun in earnest, Lewis Hallam, later wrote of Upton’s betrayal when he appealed to the citizens of New York for permission to perform in 1753; “Mr. Upton, upon his arrival, found here that set of pretenders with whom he joined, and, unhappily for us, quite neglected the business he was sent about from England, for we never heard from him again.”<sup>40</sup> Clearly Upton’s intentions to provide viable information to the Hallams dissolved once he saw significant opportunities (albeit short-lived) for his own theatrical (and financial) advancement.

Upon his arrival in New York in December, Upton observed in a letter to William Hallam that a “set of pretenders” [Murray and Kean, known also as the Virginia Company of Comedians] was already giving performances in Philadelphia, New York and Williamsburg, Virginia. Seeing an opportunity already open, Upton and his wife temporarily joined the Murray-Kean Company, and when it disbanded shortly after his arrival, he and his wife joined the remaining actors from the original Murray-Kean company in forming a new group. Upton became the star of the stage during New York’s winter 1751/52 season, likely because he was highly self-promoting and freshly arrived from the London stage and therefore could draw audiences on his “celebrity” performances rather than on his actual talent. On December 26, 1751, Upton performed the role of Othello, the first recorded public performance of Shakespeare’s *Othello* on any American stage and the second recorded public performance of any of Shakespeare’s plays in America.<sup>41</sup> “Mrs. Upton” was listed alongside her husband as Desdemona, suggesting that these two previously unknown London actors may have enjoyed a brief celebrity status in front of New York audiences.

In Upton’s company of players the repertoire included only five plays and two farces: Nicholas Rowe’s *The Fair Penitent* (1702/3), Shakespeare’s *Othello* and *Richard III*, Colley

Cibber's *The Provoked Husband* (1728) and Thomas Otway's *Venice Preserv'd; or, a Plot Discover'd* (1682), David Garrick's *Lethe* (1740) and Robert Dodsley's *King and Miller of Mansfield* (1737) about Henry II. These productions were popular in London, but such a limited selection of performances meant that Upton's company could only stage a brief season since audience attendance was directly dependent on new productions. Likely, the combination of such limited plays (which also meant limited costumes, scenes and actors) and the lack of talented performers lead to the demise of Upton's company within a year. Failing to set himself up as an American theatre celebrity, Upton and his wife returned to England in debt in 1752. It is also possible, given the imminent arrival of Lewis Hallam in New York in June 1753, that Upton wanted to make a getaway before facing Hallam. While their ship was delayed in port in New York, the Uptons took advantage of the delay to continue performing until their departure. Mrs. Upton managed to have one last benefit in order to secure a significant portion of the ticket sales, performing the role of the noblewoman Belvidera in Thomas Otway's highly political tragedy, *Venice Preserv'd*, on February 20, 1752.<sup>42</sup> *Venice Preserv'd* saw repeated performances the following week although Mrs. Upton did not appear in the lead role; instead another actress, Mrs. Tremain, made her debut as Belvidera. Once they sailed for England, Upton and his wife disappeared from Anglophone stage records. Their names are not listed on playbills after 1753 in Britain or America. It is likely that the Uptons did not return to London or to the stage in an attempt not to cross paths again with William Hallam whose money they had used to establish their own (albeit unsuccessful) venture in forming an American touring company.

### **Lewis Hallam's London Company of Comedians**

William Hallam and his brother, Lewis, Sr., in spite of losing both money and time when Robert Upton failed to establish social connections for them to start a theatre company, went ahead with their plans of sending a small group of actors across the Atlantic. Early in May

1752, Lewis Hallam and a group of twelve adults and three children boarded the *Charming Sally* along with scripts, costumes and set designs, and made their way across the Atlantic with dreams of fame and fortune. William Hallam, a better manager and investor than a performer, never intended to travel across the Atlantic himself and remained behind in London. In order to entice participants to join, each member of the company was allowed one share of interest in the profits, including the children, and in addition, Lewis Hallam received one extra share as manager and Lewis and William Hallam each held two shares as partners in the company. In addition, every member of the London Company was allowed one benefit night each season whereby they were entitled to a portion of the night's receipts over the company's cost.

Born into a family of actors, William and Lewis Hallams were sons of Drury Lane Theatre and Covent Garden actors Adam and Anne Hallam. Four of the five Hallam brothers acted or were involved with theatre.<sup>43</sup> Lewis Hallam began his career by 1730 when his name appears alongside that of brother William's on theatre bills for the Theatre Royal Haymarket. On 17 July 1735, a "Mrs. Hallam" appeared on the billing at a performance given by William Hallam's Company of Comedians at York Buildings, London, when Lewis Hallam made his debut on that stage. For a while, the Hallam brothers performed onstage together at William's New Wells Theatre in London, with Adam Hallam and Lewis Hallam being joined by their wives at least during the six-month 1746-1747 season.<sup>44</sup> The last recorded performance in England of Mrs. Hallam and her husband Lewis Sr., was for her benefit night on 5 September 1751 when Mrs. Hallam played Desdemona in Shakespeare's *Othello*, one of the first roles she would reprise in America, while Lewis played Roderigo. William Hallam's Goodman's Fields theatre enterprise soon folded and the bankrupt theatre manager came up with a new money-making scheme, to fund an acting company to perform in America. After over a dozen years performing together throughout England with steady employment and reasonable success Mrs. Hallam and her husband, Lewis, decided to take their act overseas.<sup>45</sup>

Lewis Hallam and his London Company of Comedians first made a brief stop in Jamaica before arriving in Virginia.<sup>46</sup> Armed with London's most current plays and one afterpiece, Hallam's troupe arrived on the shores of Yorktown, Virginia in early June 1752 after a six-week journey at sea.<sup>47</sup> The London Company of Comedians then traveled from Yorktown to Williamsburg.<sup>48</sup> Within ten days of their arrival in Virginia, Hallam took out an advertisement in the *Virginia Gazette* on 12 June 1752 announcing their arrival even before they had received permission to perform or before Virginia Governor, Robert Dinwiddie (1693-1770) presented Hallam's request for a license before the Virginia Governor's Council,

*This is to inform the Public,  
That Mr. HALLAM, from the New Theatre in Goodmansfields, London, is daily expected here with a select Company of Comedians; the Scenes, Cloaths and Decorations are all entirely new, extremely rich, and furnished in the highest Taste, the Scenes being painted by the best Hands in London, are excell'd by none in Beauty and Elegance, so that the Ladies and Gentleman may depend on being entertain'd in as polite a Manner as at the Theatres in London, the Company being perfect in all the best Plays, Opera's Farces, and Pantomimes, that have been exhibited in any of the Theatres for these ten Years past.*<sup>49</sup>

Intending to pique the interest of Williamsburg residents, Hallam advertised his company as the best theatrical group with the newest and smartest collection of performances and equipment London had to offer. Yet, Virginia Governor Robert Dinwiddie remained hesitant to give them a license to perform in spite of Hallam's enthusiasm; in large part because the Murray-Kean Company's recent departure from Williamsburg had not been on good terms. As a result, the Virginia governor and his Council were reticent to allow an otherwise untested troupe a license to perform in Williamsburg.<sup>50</sup>

This hesitancy in obtaining a license cost Hallam precious time and money. For six weeks, the London Company sat idle, waiting for permission to perform and wondering whether their venture to America had been in vain. Obviously Hallam (and his brother William) hoped that with limited competition in America and with their own solid reputation, that they would find themselves in a more lucrative venture. Unwilling to give up, Hallam purchased the theatre used by the Murray-Kean Company for 150 pounds 10 shillings even before he obtained a license from

Dinwiddie. Not a London theatre by any standard, this simple structure located near the Capitol building looked out on the edge of the woods, but it was purpose-built as a theatre and good enough for a start.<sup>51</sup>

Dinwiddie ultimately granted permission to the London Company to perform. Hallam's company needed to impress Williamsburg residents with their premier performance if they wanted their theatre venture to be a success. In August, the *Virginia Gazette* reported, "The Company lately from London have altered the Playhouse to a regular theatre fit for the reception of Ladies and Gentlemen and the execution of their own performance."<sup>52</sup> And on Friday, 28 August 1752, a large advertisement appeared in the *Virginia Gazette* announcing the first performance of Hallam's company, to take place on Friday, 15 September 1752.<sup>53</sup> They performed Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* that included a "new occasional Prologue" and Edward Ravenscroft's (1654-1707) two-act farce, *The Anatomist; or, Sham Doctor* (1697). Prices remained the same for this six-o'clock performance as those that the Murray-Kean Company had charged the previous season.<sup>54</sup>

Even though they prepared for their 15 September opening performance of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* (1596/98) they ran into unforeseen difficulties. Twelve-year-old Lewis Hallam, Jr., making his first performance in America, showed none of the theatrical composure for which he would later be known. The *Virginia Gazette* reported that the boy "stood motionless and speechless, until bursting into tears he walked off the stage making a most inglorious exit."<sup>55</sup> His sister, Sarah (or Helen), also debuted on the American stage in the role of Jessica though the paper took no special notice of her performance; in fact little notice was taken of Sarah (or Helen) during her entire American acting career and after a few years she slipped from theatrical accounts, likely returning to England where her sister Isabella remained in the care of their Aunt Barrington. In spite of minor glitches, the *Virginia Gazette* remarked on the success of this first performance; "On Friday last the Company of Comedians from England open'd the Theatre in this City, when *The Merchant of Venice*, and *Anatomist* were perform'd, before a numerous and

polite Audience, with great Applause.”<sup>56</sup> In fact, the London Company impressed their audience so much that just weeks later, as Governor Dinwiddie prepared to entertain a Cherokee entourage in order to enter into peaceful trade negotiations, Hallam’s Company was enlisted to perform.<sup>57</sup> We will take a closer look at this encounter, a significant event that highlights the use of theatre in negotiating political and cultural exchanges, later in the chapter.

When they decided to leave Virginia at the end of the season, having run through their battery of plays, the London Company again met with resistance when they moved to New York.<sup>58</sup> Even with a letter from Dinwiddie vouching for their moral character and professionalism, it took Hallam’s company several weeks to obtain their license. The London Company gave performances in New York on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays throughout the season which lasted from 17 September 1753 until 14 March 1754, and included at least twenty-one plays, including three Shakespearean tragedies.<sup>59</sup> And the *New York Gazette* described Hallam’s New York theatre as “a very fine, large and commodious theatre” and ticket prices for attending theatre remained similar to Williamsburg prices.<sup>60</sup> However, New York audiences must not have been overly receptive for the 24 September 1753 *Mercury* announced the London Company’s performance of Thomas Baker’s comedy, *Tumbridge Wells* with “Prices reduced. Boxes, 6 shillings. Pit, 5 shillings. Gallery, 3 shillings.”<sup>61</sup>

From its beginning, Hallam’s company moved seasonally (generally starting plays in September and ending in April of the following year) in an effort to maintain audience interest and to make their investment and their employability viable.<sup>62</sup> Hallam never made any significant profit but he did keep his company afloat, and paid off his debts—most of the time—a noteworthy feat for such a financially risky and expensive endeavor. Within two years of the company’s initial voyage to America, the threat of losing money eventually led William to allow Lewis to purchase his remaining shares of the Company. Between September 1752 and June 1754, for example, the London Company performed in Williamsburg (15 September 1752 to June

1753), New York (17 September 1753 to 18 March 1754) and concluded in America with thirty performances in Philadelphia (15 April 1754 through 24 June 1754).

While the establishment of what might be called “professional” theatre in the greater transatlantic Anglophone world certainly begins with the story of Lewis Hallam’s London Company of Comedians and their foray onto the British North American theatrical scene in 1752, they struggled to survive as a traveling company even as they establish themselves as America’s first permanent touring troupe of professional players.<sup>63</sup> When Hallam made the decision to retreat to Jamaica in 1754 in order to regroup and look for additional actors, it was in part because of difficulties encountered in establishing and maintaining paying audiences. After Hallam’s death in 1755, David Douglass would take the helm and under his leadership and clever remarketing of the London Company as the American Company, this group of performers solidified their legitimate place on the American stage.

### **David Douglass and the American Company**

When Hallam’s company arrived in Jamaica in 1754, they joined forces with Moody’s company. At the time Moody’s company included Moody, (recruited by David Garrick for his Theatre Royal Drury Lane in London in 1759), the Messrs. Douglass, Kershaw, Smith, Daniell, Morris and their wives, and Miss Hamilton. Shortly after Lewis Hallam, Sr., died of yellow fever in 1755, fellow actor David Douglass married Hallam’s widow and took over the management of Hallam’s acting troupe.<sup>64</sup> When Moody left Jamaica to return to London, his managerial rights and theatrical property were transferred over to the actors.<sup>65</sup> The reformed London Company under Douglass’s management returned to America in summer 1758 and began touring in New York before they performed in Philadelphia. Still known as the London Company of Comedians when they arrived that summer, Douglass sensed the American audience’s desire to distance itself from England and by 1763 Douglass cleverly changed the name of the company to the American

Company thereby re-imagining a removal of theatre from its British associations and projecting onto colonial American theatre a new cultural identity.

In spite of what appears to have been a rather antagonistic Philadelphia populace, Douglass's company performed in that city from 25 June to 28 December 1759. On 5 April 1759, Douglass received permission "To build a Theatre and Act Without the bounds of the City." Yet on 20 June of that same year, a law prohibiting theatres was passed. However, the law was eventually amended by Governor Denny so that it would not become active until 1 January 1760, following the American Company's departure. During their 1759 season in Philadelphia, Douglass's company performed over eighty plays (twenty-eight performances are known, including five by Shakespeare) and possibly as many after pieces.<sup>66</sup> On 25 June 1759, the American Company opened the season with Nicolas Rowe's *Tamerlane* (1702), along with Henry Fielding's *The Virgin Unmasked, a musical entertainment* (1724), an entertainment originally written by Fielding for popular London actress, Kitty Clive.<sup>67</sup> Philadelphia's law prohibiting public theatrical performances was eventually repealed on 2 September 1760, but Douglass's company had long departed Philadelphia for more appreciative audiences. It would be another seven years before Douglass and the American Company returned to Philadelphia.<sup>68</sup>

From 1759-1766, Douglass and his company performed in Williamsburg, Virginia; Charleston, South Carolina; Providence, Rhode Island; New York City and Jamaica. The American Company spent a season in New York but in May 1766, the Chapel Theatre in which they were performing was demolished by an angry mob as previously mentioned. Reacting to the repeal of the Stamp Act the New York Sons of Liberty, imagining theatre as a symbol of British oppression, attacked the actors and burnt the theatre to the ground. This act of violence, and the lack of a theatre in which to perform, forced the departure of Douglass's company; they fled to Philadelphia hoping to establish a more permanent home in the British North American colonies. Douglass and his troupe arrived in Philadelphia in 1766. The American Company built the Southwark Theatre (See Figure 3.2) in an attempt to establish more permanent roots in the city.

The theatre was deliberately built on the south side of South Street, then the southern boundary of the City of Philadelphia, so that the building would be outside city limits and beyond the city's restrictive theatre policies towards theater.<sup>69</sup>

With a population second in colonial America in 1740, Philadelphia with 13,000 residents ranked behind Boston's 16,400 residents. By 1760 the population of Philadelphia climbed to 23,800, and by

1790 when it served as the official capital of the United States it was 28,522. By 1800 Philadelphia's population hovered around 41,220 residents.<sup>70</sup> Philadelphia possessed the second highest Catholic

population in the colonies. Lutheran and Reformed Churches

boasted substantial congregations. The Mikveh Israel Congregation established itself in 1740, and Methodists built a church in the city in 1769.<sup>71</sup> Even though Quakers were not the only religious influence in Philadelphia before 1770, they still dominated politics and social life in the 1760s, and they were also the most outspoken religious group calling out the inappropriateness of theatre as a public form of entertainment. In a published rebuke to a young Quaker woman who liked attending plays, the woman was reminded to take "exceptions against" a gentleman of the clergy because "he frequents Plays [and] also attends every place of public amusements, and above all other entertainments, delights in dancing."<sup>72</sup> The author of this pamphlet nonetheless argued that

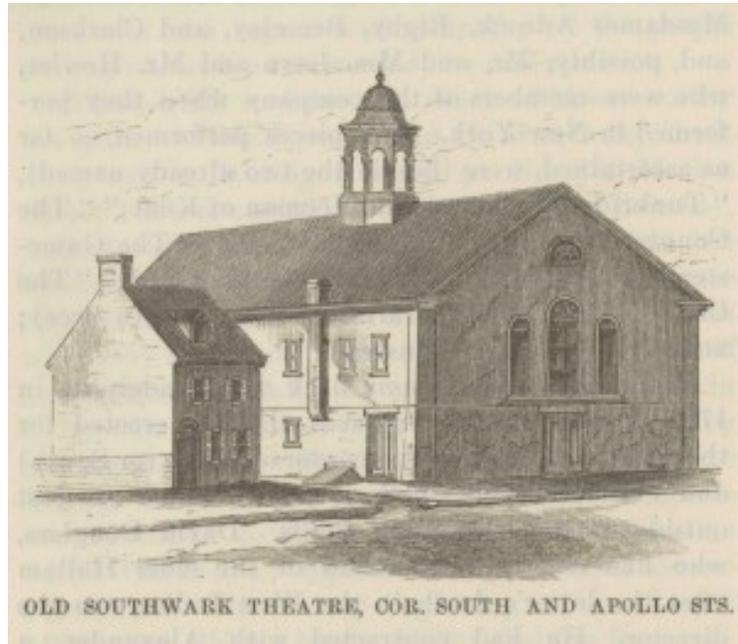


Figure 3.2. Southwark Theatre, Philadelphia, c. 1766, on the corner of South and Apollo Streets or on the southwest corner of what is now South & Leithgow Streets. Its front facade was 50 feet wide on South and 90 feet deep on Leithgow, extending almost to Bainbridge Street (see image above). It had a brick first floor and wooden upper floors with a distinctive cupola on the roof.

plays were appropriate entertainments and that should not be regulated by the church because “they are permitted exhibitions amongst every society of Christians. The Roman Catholics of *Paris*, the Calvinists of the *Hague*, the Lutherans in *Germany*, the Kirk of *Scotland*, and the Church of *England*, are proofs of the authenticity of my assertion.”<sup>73</sup> This anonymous author also insisted that “a virtuous audience will always regulate, and influence the Stage.”<sup>74</sup> This author’s wishes for theatre seem to have been granted for around the time this pamphlet circulated through Philadelphia, David Douglass’s American Company opened the Southwark Theatre, the city’s first permanent theatre.

The American Company’s 1766 season opened with Colley Cibber’s revision of John Vanbrugh’s fragment comedy *The Provoked Husband* (1728) and followed with Isaac Bickerstaff’s dramatic pastoral opera afterpiece, *Thomas and Sally; or the sailors return* (1760 first performed, 1761 first published).<sup>75</sup> On 19 November 1766, the company performed Susanna Centlivre’s *The Wonder a Woman Keeps a Secret* (1714). The Southwark Theatre’s first season lasted until 6 July 1767.<sup>76</sup> Mrs. Douglass continued to take lead roles for a few more years though she would soon hand over these roles to Margaret Cheer and other younger actresses who had joined the company recently in Jamaica. Throughout the 1766/1767 season the American Company performed at least one hundred and nineteen separate plays, including afterpieces. While several of these performances were repeat productions, the number of roles required by actresses to learn for each performance, generally given two or three times weekly, was extraordinary.

In April 1767 Douglass decided at the last minute against staging one of the first operas written by an American, *The Disappointment, or, The Force of Credulity* (1767), a ballad opera in two acts. *The Disappointment* was written by an anonymous author who took the *nom de plume* of “Andrew Barton.” While *The Disappointment* was literally the first American play ever advertised to be performed, it was not actually the first American play staged. Instead of staging *The Disappointment* and risking disappointing his audience, Douglass and his performers hastily

put together a production by American-born Thomas Godfrey (1736-1763). Godfrey's blank-verse tragedy, *The Prince of Parthia* was first published 1765 but it had yet to be staged.<sup>77</sup> In fact, the *Pennsylvania Gazette* would seem to support Douglass's decision and reported that Barton's play, *The Disappointment* "contains personal reflections...unfit for the stage."<sup>78</sup> So, replacing one American-written play for another, on 24 April 1767, the American Company finally performed its very first "American" play. Among the principal actresses performing in this 1767 production of *The Prince of Parthia* were Mrs. Morris who played Edessa, the Queen's attendant; Sarah Wainwright who performed as Cleone, Evanthe's confidant; Mrs. Douglass who played Thermusa, the Queen; and Margaret Cheer (fl. 1767-1793), who would rise to become one of the company's premier performers and who acted the role of the lovely and beloved Evanthe.<sup>79</sup> William Dunlap commented on this assemblage of actresses, asserting, "Mrs. Douglass, Miss Cheer, and Mrs. Morris [were] the most prominent performers of the day."<sup>80</sup> During their phenomenal season twenty-seven different actors performed at the Southwark Theatre, eighteen of whom were new to Philadelphia that year, including three actresses who would rise to become the American Company's most recognized celebrities: Margaret Cheer, Sarah Wainwright, and Mrs. Morris.<sup>81</sup>

David Douglass's American Company's eventful year continued after their departure from Philadelphia in the summer of 1767. After opening Philadelphia's first permanent theatre, Southwark Theatre, in November 1766, the American Company ventured up to New York City where they opened yet another theatre to replace the Chapel Street Theatre demolished by the angry mob the previous May. The John Street Theatre, located at 15-21 John Street, opened on 7 December 1767. Designed similar to Philadelphia's Southwark Theatre, it also reflected similar English-style theatres of the period with its apron stage, benches for pit guests, and various box seats and galleries. While Douglass had previously built two other temporary theatres in New York City to house his company (Cruger's Wharf Theatre and Beekman Street/Chapel Street

Theatre), it was Douglass's third theatre that would serve as New York City's only permanent theatrical building until 1797.

Significant social and cultural diplomacy between the American Company performers and Cherokee leaders occurred again in December 1767 at the John's Street Theatre in New York when a Cherokee delegation attended a performance of Shakespeare's *Richard III*. Attakullakulla, also known as Little Carpenter and the Raven King of Toogoloo, along with six other chiefs from South Carolina came to watch the tragedy. The *Pennsylvania Gazette* reported; "The expectation of seeing the Indian chiefs at the play on Monday night occasioned a great concourse of people. The house was crowded, and it is said great numbers were obliged to go away for want of room."<sup>82</sup> The *Gazette* further commented with obvious Anglo-prejudice that while the Indians watched attentively, "it cannot be supposed that they were sufficiently acquainted with the language to understand the plot and design and enter into the spirit of the author, their countenances and behavior were rather expressive of surprise and curiosity than any other passions."<sup>83</sup>

Unlike Shakespeare's *Othello*, which Hallam's London Company performed for the Cherokee entourage in 1752, and which members of the delegation may have seen years before, the onstage violence in *Richard III* is kept to a minimum. Even though many characters die offstage, the only onstage death is actually King Richard's. Also, the language in *Richard III* explains Richard's motivations and thus is a dialogue-heavy production that would have required the audience to know English well enough to comprehend the play. The attendance of these Cherokee officials at this particular performance might have been by chance, though it is possible that rather being ignorant as the *Gazette* suggested, the Cherokee delegation understood English well enough and had become more assimilated into Anglo culture to appreciate the performance. Given the play's themes and their current troubled negotiations with the colonists, the Cherokees may have empathetically interpreted Richard's desire for power in a time of peace, perhaps

identifying with his character more in light of their recent dealings with the British during the Anglo-Cherokee war.

Richard's physical appearance would have also intrigued the Cherokees. Like Othello, whose difference was translated into the blackness of his skin clearly presenting him as the "other" or outsider, Richard's deformity may have also evoked sympathy from this Cherokee audience since they believed that physical deformity suggested a person's closeness to the spiritual world. Thus the Cherokee interpretation of *Richard III* may have imagined Richard as enlightened rather than as a monster as the English audience might. However, to the Cherokees, "The concept of spiritual warfare included ritual maiming. By disfiguring the physical body, the enemy became degraded, unworthy, emasculated men"<sup>84</sup> and thus the audience may have seen the deformed character of Richard in this light as well. Additional elements in *Richard III* may have held equal fascination with the Cherokee since the ghost scenes could easily have been translated by them into the belief in the power of dreams integral in many Indian cultures.<sup>85</sup>

*Richard III* is also a play about warfare, honor, and gendered expectations of male power. Thus, the Cherokees in attendance could have identified with Richard's drive for power as Susan Abram has suggested, "In the eighteenth century, warfare in Cherokee culture was an institution that expressed spiritual power, honor, and communal and clan values."<sup>86</sup> Further, Abram posits, "Warfare was a path to manhood, increased social status, and secured political influence."<sup>87</sup> Certainly translating both the language of the play and its subtle cultural nuances provided the Cherokees in the audience with much to consider and their interpretations and experience of the play may have been significantly different from the Anglo audience in attendance with them, but for reasons not appreciated by the author of the *Gazette* article.

For the evening's performance, a pantomime was substituted for the planned *Oracle* afterpiece, with the belief that the Cherokee group might better appreciate this light-hearted work. Following the performance, the Cherokee warriors took the stage themselves and performed their own "Indian war dance," the first performance of its kind given on any American stage.<sup>88</sup> While

the *Gazette* article mentioned above claiming the Cherokees were “[in]sufficiently acquainted with the language to understand the plot and design and enter into the spirit of the author,” it is likely that the Anglo audience was not “sufficiently acquainted with the language” of the war dance to understand Cherokee culture. Thus one really significant moment of cultural exchange becomes conflated by Anglo derision rather than what could have been an important moment to learn about Cherokee culture, especially since warfare was such a significant part of Cherokee social, sacred, and political life.

According to Abram, these dances represented different moments in the engagement of war. First, “Death was another part of Cherokee warfare that was connected to the spiritual. It released the body’s four souls, one of which could remain behind as a ghostlike entity.”<sup>89</sup> Relatives mourned while “other Cherokee celebrated the returning warriors. After the four-day waiting period, a gallant procession of warriors dressed in their finest and covered in their war paint entered the sacred square-ground to partake in the festivities” which included cutting up any scalps they obtained and distributing those throughout the community becoming an act of satisfying their revenge on their enemy.<sup>90</sup> In addition, the warriors took their turns at becoming the “central dancer, reenacting his masculine feats of stealth and bravery through hyperbole, while brandishing his red-and-black war club.”<sup>91</sup> As James Adair wrote when he witnessed one such event, “Their martial drums beat, their bloody colours are displayed, and most of the young people are dancing and rejoicing, for the present success of their nation, and the safe return and preferment of their friends and relations.”<sup>92</sup>

Of course this was not the only war dance; the “eagle tail dance” allowed Cherokee men to move, as Abram states, “from exhibitions of war to peace—a transfer from the red state to the white state. This exhibition of male strength and the generosity of peace made quite an impression on visiting dignitaries when about a dozen warriors ‘painted all over’ ran toward them, dancing and waving sacred eagle tail wands.”<sup>93</sup> This particular war dance “represented the setting aside of war between equals—real men—for a state of peace and friendship...The eagle

tail feathers represented victory, power, and peace, while a string of beads, probably white in color, represented the offering of peace, acceptance of friendship, honor, and respect.”<sup>94</sup> Just as symbolic language and actions in Shakespeare’s *Richard III* may have caused a cultural divide between the Anglo audience and the Cherokee warriors, so would the specific symbolism of these objects and actions caused a cultural disconnect between the different members of the audience.

Another Cherokee war dance also provided community relief and, according to Abram, “served as a charitable performance and exhibition of masculinity.”<sup>95</sup> Using pantomime, warriors danced the story of “his first taking of an enemy’s scalp” to showcase a warrior’s strength and stealth.<sup>96</sup> When the music ended, the warrior narrated his story, then placed something of value on a large hide, a symbol of community solidarity and sacrifice. What is significant here is the public performance nature of warfare—celebrations of successful raids, celebrations of fallen warriors, celebrations of communal solidarity. As Abram claims, “Cherokee warriors displayed their commitment through public performance to gain and express status and to allow the community to show their pride in their accomplishments as a people.”<sup>97</sup> These dances served to showcase masculinity and acted to make public just how important war was to the Cherokee in defining “sacred, social, and political dimensions of their society.”<sup>98</sup> While the Cherokee would have known the overt symbolic gestures in their movements, dress, and expressions—and which celebration of war they presented to their Anglo audience, it is highly unlikely that many people in the audience would have understood the significant symbolic gestures they witnessed or just how important war dances were in celebrating and honoring the Cherokee community. So while the *Gazette* presented the Cherokees as ignorant, the Anglo audience also in attendance that day must have been at least as ignorant and astonished at the performance as the Cherokees had been seeing *Richard III*.

Clearly the experience watching *Richard III* and performing for the Anglophone audience had a positive effect on the Cherokee delegation. In April 1768, they returned to observe Susanna Centlivre’s comedy, *The Wonder: a Woman Keeps a Secret*. While Anglophone theatre

frequently portrayed American Indians as idealized “noble savages,” at these two moments, the Cherokee warriors embraced Anglophone culture by actively participating in it as audience members and as performers, providing a unique space for social and cultural diplomacy that both entertained and informed.

After their 1767/1768 season in New York ended, the American Company returned to Philadelphia in 1768 where their season lasted from 4 October 1768 to 6 January 1769.<sup>99</sup> It is unknown why this particular season in Philadelphia was so brief, but it is likely that even after building a permanent theatre structure, Douglass’s company faced censure. In September 1768, a broadside cautioned all “Friends and Bretheren” of the “ensnaring Diversions of the Horse Races and Stage Plays, which are intended to be again exhibited in and near this City.”<sup>100</sup> The broadside further urged readers to “seriously consider the Danger and destructive Tendency, of countenancing or encouraging these profane Amusements, by attending, or being Spectators of them, as they evidently tend to introduce Idleness, Licentiousness and Intemperance.”<sup>101</sup> Regardless of the reasons for a quick departure from the city in January 1769 in a rather truncated season, Douglass’s American Company returned to Philadelphia in September 1769.

During his twenty-year management, David Douglass took Lewis Hallam’s London Company of Comedians and transformed them into a truly American acting troupe, not only in renaming them the American Company, but also in the plays they performed and the audiences they entertained. They continued to perform in New York, Philadelphia, Charleston, Annapolis and Baltimore for the first years of the 1770s. Mrs. (Hallam) Douglass died in Philadelphia in 1773/4 when the American Revolution closed theatres in North America, and Douglass returned to Jamaica with a significant number of his acting company still in attendance. The American Company continued performing in Jamaica for almost ten years or for the duration of the American Revolution. In 1779, even though he had retired from theatre management and performing in order to take up his original trade as a printer, Douglass was appointed Master of the Revels in Jamaica. Perhaps his timing was just right in returning to printing for Douglass and

his printing partner, William Aikman, were appointed “King’s Printer for Jamaica and its dependencies.” Having transformed the London Company into the American Company and crafting an important “American” identity for the company, ironically, Douglass became representative for the King as Jamaica’s official government printer, a shift in occupation that allowed him to die in Kingston, Jamaica, a rich man.

### **Eighteenth-Century Anglophone Playhouses**

While the story of the initial theatre troupes in America illuminates aspects of transatlantic Anglophone cultural exchange, examining the physical spaces of early American theatres sheds light on where these early acting companies performed and how audiences engaged with these performances. Examining these playhouses also shows how public places were used as important social and communal spaces. While theatres in America varied in location and audience attendance was limited, theatre managers almost universally discriminated between members of various social classes attending the theatre. Ticket prices for a Murray-Kean Company performance in 1750 cost “7 shillings 6 pence for boxes, 5 shillings 9 pence for pit and balconies, and 3 shillings 9 pence for gallery places.”<sup>102</sup> When the London Company of Comedians arrived in America, they charged the same prices for their performances.<sup>103</sup> In fact, theatre ticket prices remained consistent throughout the century in America. Theatre managers brought with them transatlantic practices of separating the classes and providing them with different experiences even as they included them in the same cultural event.<sup>104</sup> While the pricing scheme allowed for a variety of social classes to mingle within a public space, it also segregated the classes and meant that wealthy attendants received a (potentially) enhanced performance experience since the plays they watched were visually “consumed” differently and resulted in different meanings depending on their location in the theatre.<sup>105</sup> As the power of American consumers grew, so did the importance of beautifying the theatre space to entice audiences into attending and enhance the

audience experience.<sup>106</sup> The increase in the involvement of the consumer with goods and services imported to America challenged deference traditionally given because of social rank and standing in the community.<sup>107</sup>

Theatre companies performed in provisionally built theatres in mid-eighteenth-century America, partly because simple structures could be built quickly without high cost and partly because theatre managers knew that regardless of the population of American cities, they were simply not large enough before 1790 to maintain permanent theatre companies or permanent theatre structures. Theatre structures were commonly built to be used interchangeably as theatres, public meeting spaces, or even churches. Sometimes they were simply torn down (since construction was rudimentary) to make way for a more useful building. Often, theatre companies constructed theatre spaces when they came to town to perform and then sold them when they left so that if they returned again later, thus theatres themselves were transitory. Until the 1790s, theatres in America remained temporary structures that were easily converted for other uses, suggesting a continued lack of commitment both from audiences in supporting any permanent acting company and the unwillingness of theatre companies to establish roots more permanently in one location.

The earliest American theatres were very basic structures, especially compared with the more complex (if warren-like) royal London theatres like Drury Lane and Covent Garden. They possessed two or three seating or standing areas (the pit) for an audience of approximately three hundred persons, a raised stage often edged with spikes to keep the audience at bay, places for torches to be used as lighting near the edge of the stage, and a “tiring” or retiring area behind stage where performers changed or awaited their turn onstage and where additional scenery and equipment was stored. A fine example of one of the first known theatre structures in America was theatre William Levingston constructed in Williamsburg, Virginia in 1716, which sat on a three-and-a-half acre lot. The property included a house, outdoor kitchen, stable and bowling alley (another lively form of entertainment for the community). Far from a private success, in 1723 the

town foreclosed on the lot, giving it to the College of William and Mary for their students to use for dances and student theatrical productions. In 1732, a theatre was constructed in New York City near the junction of Pearl Street and Maiden Lane, later known as the New Theatre or Nassau Street Theatre.<sup>108</sup> The Nassau Street Theatre was described as:

a two-storied house with high gables. The stage was raised five feet from the floor. The scenes curtains and wings were all carried by the managers in their 'property' trunks. A green curtain was suspended from the ceiling. A pair of paper screens were erected upon the right and left hand sides for wings. Six wax lights were in front of the stage. The orchestra consisted of a German flute, horn and drum players. Suspended from the ceiling was the chandelier, made of a barrel hoop, through which were driven half a dozen nails into which were stuck so many candles. Two drop scenes representing a castle and a wood, bits of landscape, river and mountain comprised the scenery."<sup>109</sup>

In 1735, theatres companies used the court house in Charleston, South Carolina for a performance space until the more permanent Dock Street Theatre opened in 1736.<sup>110</sup>

William Plumstead's warehouse in Philadelphia also

served as a theatre space<sup>111</sup> and an advertisement for New York's Nassau Street Theatre in the *New York Post-boy* announced, "Last week arrived here a company of comedians [Murray-Kean Company] from Philadelphia, who we hear have taken a convenient Room for their Purpose in one of the buildings lately belonging to the Hon. Rip Van Dam Esq., deceased, in Nassau Street, where they intend to perform as long as the season lasts, provided they meet with suitable encouragement."<sup>112</sup>

When he came to America, Lewis Hallam brought scenery from London, likely used, from which he built the entire season's sets. Hallam also employed artists from Theatre Royal Drury Lane and Theatre Royal Covent Garden to create backdrops for his scenes, but weeks of

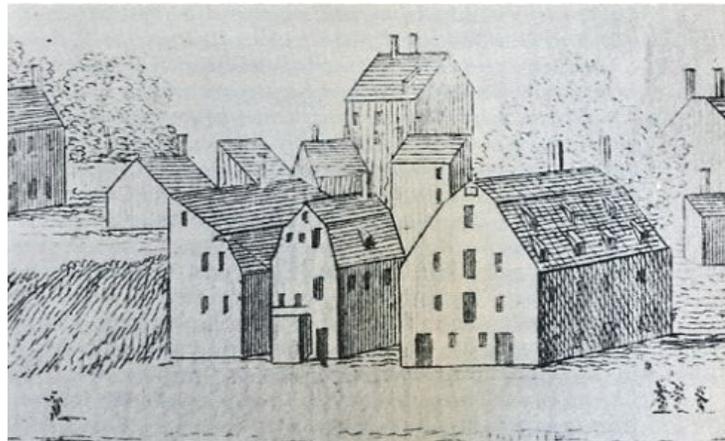


Figure 3.3. 1754 Sketch of William Plumstead's Warehouse in Philadelphia on Water Street between Pine and Lombard, site of earliest theatre performances in Philadelphia.

travels by sea and then travel over land likely wreaked havoc on stage curtains and props. Carrying all of these theatre necessities, along with feeding and housing the company itself, was both expensive and cumbersome, though scenes and costumes could be repurposed for different performances. American theatre completely copied standards and practices employed in London and American stages before 1770 did not employ significant innovation—nor could they have afforded to, and in fact, American audiences attended theatre in order to see a variety of European and English scene painters.<sup>113</sup>

The New Theatre in Annapolis, Maryland, built by Douglass for the American Company in 1760, could offer, Douglass boasted, “Feats of Covent-Garden’s Harlequin...Athens from such Beginnings, mean and low! Saw Thespis’ Cart a wond’rous Structure grow.”<sup>114</sup> Ten year later in October 1770, Douglass experienced a change of heart about this building believing their performances suffered “under every Disadvantage from the Situation, Size, and aukward [sic] Construction of the House.”<sup>115</sup> Douglass hoped a more “commodious Theatre” would be erected “in a convenient Part of the City of Annapolis” and in which audiences “for about Six Weeks every Year, including the Autumnal Provincial Court and Races” would find a theatre that would “stimulate them to a grateful Exertion of their Faculties for the Entertainment of the Publick, whose Favours this Season they acknowledge to have been infinitely superior to their Expectations.”<sup>116</sup> Donations of amounts five pounds or higher would be given half their value of the subscription in tickets one season and the remainder the following season.<sup>117</sup>

An anonymous critic commented in the *Maryland Gazette* in September 1770 that the Annapolis theatre was ill-suited for the American Company, whom he claimed were “superior to that of any company in England, except those of [London].”<sup>118</sup> The critic, known as “Y.Z.” lauded the performance of Nancy Hallam, claiming she, Maria Storer, was a “fine genius,” He went on to praise Mrs. Douglass’s “striking...propriety,” and Mrs. Harman’s “perspicacity and strength of memory.”<sup>119</sup> “Y.Z.” also noted Nancy Hallam “exceeded the utmost idea. Such delicacy of manner! Such classical strictness of expression! ... How true and thorough her

knowledge of the character she personated...methought I heard once more the warbling of [Colley] Cibber in my ear.”<sup>120</sup> Yet, according to him, her “Vox Liquida” was diminished under “the horrid ruggedness of the roof, and the untoward construction of the whole house.”<sup>121</sup> Clearly the theatre structure itself was becoming an important “character” in American theatre.

On 4 October 1770 Douglass took out an advertisement in the *Maryland Gazette*, appealing to the public to support his plan, “as the Expence [sic] of building a Theatre would be more than the Company could possibly pay out of the Receipts of the One Season, after deducting the incidental nightly Charge, and allowing the Performers a moderate Support; Mr. Douglass, urged by a Number of his Friends, begs Leave to solicit the Assistance of the Publick to a Scheme, which will enable him effectually to carry the Design into Execution, and at the same Time will not be very disadvantageous to the Ladies and Gentlemen, whose publick Spirit, and Taste for the rational Entertainments of the Stage, may lead them to patronise the Undertaking.”<sup>122</sup> In spite of his efforts to improve theatre construction, theatre structures on the scale of London theatres were not built in American until after the Revolution: the Chestnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia (1794), the Haymarket Theatre in Boston (1794-96), and the Park Theatre in New York (1798).

While American theatres were modeled after London theatres, mid-eighteenth-century London theatres, like Drury Lane, Covent Garden and Goodman’s Fields theatres boasted structures 120 long and 50 feet wide during this period.<sup>123</sup> Audience members passed through a house and shop-lined alleyway, and then past a ticket seller in a small cubicle before proceeding down a long dark tunnel at the end of which were three steps ascending to the “well” at the front of the stage. The U-shaped pit was nearest the stage, with about ten long backless benches. A narrow trough of footlights illuminated the stage (creating illumination from below that could be quite eerie) and members of the pit were separated from the players onstage by two rows of narrow spikes along the entire stage front. The floor in these London theatres rose slightly toward the back so the area at the back of the pit nearest the wooden boxes was almost stage height. This

gradually raised floor of course allowed better viewing opportunities for these lowest-paying members of the audience. In fact, the pit and the wooden boxes could be imagined as being one unit rather than two separate areas since audience members in the pit often chatted with friends seated in the boxes behind and above.<sup>124</sup> From the back of the pit arose tiers of upper boxes and above these were the middle gallery that formed a raised amphitheatre. Above these raised boxes that commanded the highest prices, was the upper gallery, also known as the “third tier” where prostitutes “performed” for additional theatrical entertainment.

Another entrance for the stage stood opposite the entrance used by audience members. Dressing rooms for performers lined the back of the theatre, along with green rooms (rooms where performers waited between scenes or before they went on stage). Storage areas filled with scenery and stage props extended the last 25 feet at the back of the building furthest away from the audience. Candlelight illuminated these back spaces, which had no windows, and actors had to make their way through these poorly-lit areas back stage to the curtain or stage area. A forestage or platform could be raised or lowered to extend the depth of the stage past the curtain area (sometimes called an apron) and thus inside the theatre was divided into three areas the house, where the audience resided, the platform or area in front of the stage, and the stage itself, including the backstage area.<sup>125</sup> For a time during the eighteenth century in London, significant members of the audience could sit onstage during a performance (sometimes even join in the performance especially if it involved dancing). Thus audience could become part of the live performance, especially if they were willing to pay a fee; the practice was on the wane by the mid eighteenth century and was never popularly employed in America. While London theatres themselves remained little changed between 1660 and 1780, during the last two decades of the eighteenth century, they began to undergo major reconstruction changes between 1780 and 1800, both because they were in desperate need of updating and because theatre managers were eager to increase theatre size and put new technology to use in productions.<sup>126</sup> By the end of the eighteenth century Drury Lane Theatre, now built with stronger iron supports, could seat 3600

people and included new technology that in turn brought in paying audiences who could in turn pay for theatre changes and the increased salaries demanded by new “celebrity” actors.

These changes in theatre construction and size significantly changed performances. Some observers bemoaned the mammoth size and longed for the “warm close observant seats of Old Drury” and actress Sarah Siddons called it “a wilderness of a place.”<sup>127</sup> Not only did the vast size of the theatre make it difficult to establish any sense of intimacy between performers and the audience, recognizing standard gestures and hearing actors’ voices was now quite difficult.<sup>128</sup> Yet, what the new Drury Lane Theatre lacked in intimacy it made up for in spectacle. One 1794 theatrical production in London featured real water flowing down a rocky stream into a lake that was large enough to row a boat. Water flowed from tanks in the attic that had been installed, along with a much touted iron safety curtain, as proof against fire.<sup>129</sup>

During the eighteenth century in Britain, companies of players traveled on “the circuit” between market towns. Hundreds of these modestly sized theatres, or playhouses, were constructed, all of which were similarly built so that stock scenery could be easily erected and reused, facilitating touring. Both theatre facades and interiors were simple, interiors consisting of a rectangular flat-floored room with a stage projecting into the audience. Benches provided seating on the floor in front of the stage, and balconies arose against the three remaining walls supported simply by wooden posts or columns. Scenery stood against the rear of the stage. Like with the Royal patent theatres of London, wealthy attendees could pay extra to sit on the stage, not just for better viewing, but also to be seen by the rest of the audience and the cast. Provincial theatres opened for limited periods. When not used as theatres, the structures were used for other functions such as assembly rooms or ballrooms.

By the end of the eighteenth century, American theatres began to replicate their London counterparts. Hoping to attract larger audiences, they, too, became much more commodious. Theatre managers embraced the celebrity status of English, Irish and Welsh actresses who made their way across the Atlantic. They took their chances that American audiences wanted to see

these actresses perform and invested in building more permanent structures dedicated to theatre rather than constructing temporary buildings that were sold off following a season when touring companies left in search of a new audience. Post-revolutionary Anglo-American audiences wishing to reconnect with their British cultural roots saw theatre as an entertaining and effective mode for cultural transference. At the same time American audiences were intrigued by the shock and awe effects these new larger, more technologically advanced theater spaces afforded. Larger stages with modern technology allowed for more elaborate staging to accommodate large-scale scenes depicting castles, lakes, and grand scenes that accompanied increasingly popular melodramatic performances. Since larger theatres cost more, extravagant stagings cost more, and performers who cultivated celebrity status cost more, theatre managers struggled to make up the costs. This was certainly a risk in America where theatre had maintained a fairly tenuous hold for several decades and had never become the cultural force it developed in London.

### **Economic Forces at Play**

Economic factors also influenced the success and spread of theatre in America. Even though the population in America was thriving and cities began to grow, the entire population of colonial America barely rivaled that of London in 1750. The number of recorded residents in America was about one million in 1750, a number roughly comparable to the total population of London (750,000) at the time. Yet, as colonization expanded throughout the transatlantic Anglophone world during the second half of the eighteenth century, London actors and theatre managers saw colonial venues as opportunities to make a profit and gain personal attention away from the increasingly competitive London theatre scene. London itself supported three patent theaters, several unlicensed theatres allowed to stage performances based on singing (ballad operas being the most popular), and a host of smaller and less financially viable fair troupes. Even these traveling fair performers played for significant periods of time outside of the city. I

calculate that during the eighteenth century, a minimum population of about 100,000 people was necessary to support each individual permanent theatre. This number allows for 200 people attending each performance given over 100 nights a year, and the idea of 10% of the population attending on average two times per year. The population of all of New York State was well under 100,000 in 1750. In 1760 the population of Philadelphia was 24,000 and New York was 18,000. In fact most of colonial America was rural with 95% of the population living outside of the cities.<sup>130</sup> Thus the total potential draw of New York and Philadelphia (the two largest cities in mid-century America) plus their more rural surroundings would have scarcely added up to 100,000 people. Boston was unfriendly toward theatre until 1794. The 4<sup>th</sup> largest urban concentration in colonial America, which also supported an active theatrical season, was Charleston at 8000 people.<sup>131</sup>

Even though the population of Williamsburg was around one thousand residents in 1752, the town was increasingly cosmopolitan. American colonists who wished to emulate the “metropolitan tastes” of their British counterparts could do so by purchasing any of the several imported goods available throughout the British Empire or by attending theatre, where contemporary British cultural habits were on display. On November 17, 1752, in the same edition and on the same page of the *Virginia Gazette* that discussed the Cherokee attending the performance of *Othello*, the following items were listed for sale: “Men’s Shoes and Pumps, Turkey Coffee, Edging and Lace for Ladies Caps and some Gold Rings.”<sup>132</sup> Jean-Christophe Agnew notes that eighteenth-century theatres were importance places of economic transactions where patrons or audience members interacted with performers, prostitutes and the characters presented onstage.<sup>133</sup> Theatre served to disperse cultural changes from Britain throughout the transatlantic Anglophone world.<sup>134</sup> Styles in fashion, mannerisms, and social and political attitudes traveled with acting companies and were presented from Virginia to New York, Charleston to Philadelphia. Frank Trentmann argues that “The [British] empire established a hierarchical system of distinction that made those in the colony recycle metropolitan tastes and

habits. Emulation and distinction is an imperial as much as a social-class practice.”<sup>135</sup> Of course theatre and actors were not the only popular cultural phenomenon traveling throughout the Anglophone Empire.<sup>136</sup>

Likewise, business was booming in the British Caribbean, particularly in Jamaica where wealthy plantation owners had expanded their interests. Approximately 60% of Jamaica’s population lived on sugar plantations during the eighteenth century. The slave population alone in Jamaica increased between 1760 and 1790 from 173,000 to 276,000 individuals.<sup>137</sup> When Lewis Hallam and his company arrived in Jamaica in the summer 1753, theatre was flourishing, having been established in Spanish Town in the mid-seventeenth century, and as previously mentioned, maintained its own small theatrical company, organized by popular (“celebrity”) London actor, John Moody (1727-1812) and David Douglass.

While backing an acting company was an investment, and a risky one at that, the rewards were worth the risks and success often yielded large sums of money with a large weekly or seasonal income, for actors and theatre managers who took in a share of the profits, tempting them to continue in their unstable if semi-lucrative profession. Given the opportunity to make big money quickly, acting often appealed to risk-prone individuals who liked the challenges of performing, traveling and learning how to negotiate living in new communities often several times a year.<sup>138</sup> In 1776 the salary of actress Frances Abington at the Drury Lane Theatre placed her in the fourth position in the company overall, and in 1786 Abington was retained to perform in Dublin for fifteen nights only for the enormous sum of 500 pounds. In comparison, by the end of the century, during one week’s performances in October 1796 at Boston’s Federal Street Theatre, Elizabeth Whitlock received a salary of \$275. Considering that the month of March’s total salary expenditures for the Federal Street Theatre totaled \$418.50, covering the salaries of the company’s entire twenty-nine performers, Whitlock’s salary is impressive. Susanna Rowson, her husband and her niece, all of whom had joined Wignell’s troupe at the same time as the Whitlocks, made together only \$40 for the same period. John Hogg and Ann Storer Hogg (the

first “Mrs. John Henry” of her three sisters, once a member of the Old American Company and a favorite at the Park Theatre in New York), also employed by the Federal Street Theatre, each made \$30 for their efforts. And Madame Gardie, a dancer and pantomimist born in the French colony of Santo Dominique and who had fled Paris during the French Terror (and sadly, was eventually murdered by her husband) made a mere \$20 for her month’s contributions to the theatre.<sup>139</sup>

Actresses also made significantly more than other women involved in some capacity with theatre like seamstresses, dressers, and stage prompters. Mrs. Jackson and Mrs. Vaughan were paid \$8.50 and \$8 respectively for their work in Wardrobe during the month of March. Dressers Mrs. Kenny, Mrs. Durant and Mrs. Demsey each earned \$5 for their roles in preparing actresses for the stage, and Mrs. Stevens who, along with her husband, worked the Stage Door received \$10 for both their efforts for the month.<sup>140</sup> While the potential to earn large sums of money quickly on the level of celebrities like Frances Abington, Elizabeth Whitlock, Sarah Siddons or Isabella Mattocks, was quite small, it was possible and because competition onstage in London and Dublin, was fierce, American stages appealed to Anglophone actresses, especially after the American Revolution when Anglo-audiences sought out British cultural and theatre once again became acceptable.

By the end of the eighteenth century throughout the transatlantic Anglophone world urban centers thrived, resulting in the enlargement of theatres in London and in the building of permanent theatre structures in North America. A desire to maintain cultural connections with Britain, including seeing the latest fashions and manners of speaking, encouraged American audience attendance. Women in particular arose as important ambassadors of Anglo cultural and social exchange, with women like Nancy and Mrs. Hallam, about whom I will speak in full in a following chapter, becoming among America’s first celebrities. But before all of the theatres could be built in America or actresses became celebrities commanding impressive salaries, American theatre itself had to become legitimate. That legitimacy and cultural connection with

Britain all started with Hallam's group of eighteen performers, including women and children. The London Company who stood onstage that November in 1752 in a theatre at the edge of a wood attempted the first cultural and political theatrical diplomacy in America as they performed *Othello* in front of Williamsburg's finest residents including Virginia's governor, Robert Dinwiddie, as he attempted to negotiate a trade agreement and make peace with his neighbors his most honored guests, the Cherokee chief, his wife and son, and several of their entourage.

### **Theatrical Diplomacy in Williamsburg, November 1752**

The use of employing theatre for cultural diplomacy in earnest in America began when the London Company of Comedians performed one of Shakespeare's most famous tragedies for a Cherokee entourage at the request of Virginia Governor Robert Dinwiddie (1693-1770), during their first season in Williamsburg, Virginia in 1752.<sup>141</sup> When the London Company arrived, Governor Dinwiddie was then actively pursuing the Cherokee Chief Amouskositte, (First Beloved Man 1741-1753, and son of Moytoy of Tellico and uncle of Kanagatucko "Old Hop" Moytoy, First Beloved Man 1753-1760) in order to form a peaceful trade alliance.<sup>142</sup> At Dinwiddie's invitation, the head of the Cherokee nation, Amouskositte, his wife, their son, and several of Amouskositte's "warriors" and their "ladies" attended a performance of *Othello* on 9 November 1752.<sup>143</sup> According to Dinwiddie, Amouskositte was eager to enlist the assistance of Dinwiddie and Virginia since his relations with the governor of South Carolina were fractious.<sup>144</sup> Amouskositte and his entourage traveled the great distance of 700 miles to see Dinwiddie to enlist his help in establishing a trade treaty, though Dinwiddie stated that he

recommended to Him [Amouskositte] to continue their Trade with So[uth] Carolina, which is within 100 Miles of His Nation, but He gave me to understand there was some Uneasiness & Disputes between Him & the Governor of So[uth] Carolina; I advised Him to make up these Differences, & live in Friendship with that Colony for the Future, & I would use my Interest with the Governor to establish the same" but Amouskositte came anyway and Dinwiddie put on a show and presented them with gifts to please his guests

who went away “fully determin’d to keep up strict Friendship & Fidelity with the British Nation in General, and this Government in particular.”<sup>145</sup>

Dinwiddie welcomed the group and “assur’d them of civil Entertainment”<sup>146</sup> which of course, included fireworks, dancing, and a performance of Shakespeare’s *Othello* by the recently arrived London Company of Comedians.

Hallam’s production of *Othello* was part of a greater diplomatic event that occurred over several days and included gifts, fireworks and fancy feasts complete with dancing. Because the London Company was a novelty even to Williamsburg residents, Dinwiddie arranged a public performance for the Cherokee chief and his entourage, in order to celebrate duly the birthday of King George III and his honorable guests. There, the Cherokee delegation could mingle with Williamsburg’s finest citizens in an effort to establish strong trade relations between the Virginians and the Cherokee. On Thursday, Hallam’s Company performed *Othello* and on Friday, November 10, in honor of the “Anniversary of his Majesty’s Birthday” guests were treated to fireworks, a ball and an additional “entertainment”;

...in the Evening, the whole City was illuminated. There was a Ball, and a very elegant Entertainment, at the Palace, where were present the Emperor and Empress of the Cherokee Nation, with their Son the Young Prince, and a brilliant appearance of Ladies and Gentlemen; several beautiful fireworks were exhibited in Palace Street, by Mr. Hallam, Manager of the Theatre in this City and the Evening concluded with every Demonstration of our Zeal and Loyalty.<sup>147</sup>

In addition to providing a theatrical performance, Hallam provided the “beautiful fireworks” given in Williamsburg that November evening and his acting company was in all likelihood invited to the Ball given in honor of the Cherokee guests. On 10 November 1752, the *Virginia Gazette* announced (in one small sentence tucked in the lower corner of the second page) that “This Week arriv’d in Town the Emperor of the *Cherokee* Nation, with his Empress, to renew the Treaty of Friendship with this Government.”<sup>148</sup> The *Virginia Gazette* reported an even more thorough report of the events a week later on 17 November 1752:

The Emperor of the *Cherokee* Nation with his Empress and their Son the young Prince, attended by several of his Warriors and Great Men and their Ladies, were received at the

Palace by His Honour the Governor, attended by such of the Council as were in Town and several Gentlemen, on Thursday the 9<sup>th</sup> Instant, with all the Marks of Civility and Friendship, and were that Evening entertained, at the Theatre, with the Play, (the Tragedy of *Othello*) and a Pantomime Performance that gave them great Surprize, as did the fighting with naked Swords on the Stage, which occasioned the Empress to order some about her to prevent their killing one another. The Business of their coming is not yet made publick; but it is said to relate to the opening and establishing a Trade with this Colony, which they are very desirous of. They were dismissed with a handsome Present of fine Cloaths, Arms and Amunition; and expressed great Satisfaction in the Governor's kind Reception, and from several others; and left this Place this Morning.<sup>149</sup>

Literary historian Miles P. Grier argues that “Since the late 1880s, scholars have either credited or ignored this portrayal of risible Cherokee error. It has gone unnoticed that reports of Indian amazement at British Atlantic performances were a well-rehearsed trope by the 1750s.”<sup>150</sup> And further Grier suggests that, “For Atlantic Britons, watching Indians became an established pastime, an activity predicated on the presumption that Indians were gullible spectators, distracted from invisible meanings and values by literal appearances.”<sup>151</sup> Certainly, Grier posits, British theatre had entertained Indian visitors to England for over a century, noting Pocahontas's attendance of Ben Jonson's masque *The Vision of Delight* at the invitation of King James I in 1617 and a musical version of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* given to Mohawk and Mohican visitors to London in 1710.<sup>152</sup> Grier argues that these encounters allowed Anglo audiences to view and subordinate Indians and created another form of gawkish entertainment for readers of newspapers who spread reports of “Indian wonder and submission.”<sup>153</sup>

Indeed, Grier's interpretation of this encounter between the Cherokee entourage and the Anglo theatre offers important insight into the motivations and responses of Anglo/Indian audiences. He makes particularly interesting arguments about Anglo theatre's utility in forging what he calls “connecting vision, commerce, and race” and argues that Anglo audiences expected Indians to be what he calls “failed spectators,” or in other words spectators who were culturally disconnected with the performance.<sup>154</sup> Grier argues that theatre became a useful site of economic conversation between Anglo-Indian communities and further (using his notion of the “base Indian” previously mentioned) that “The undiscerning Indian was born of dreams of the Americas

as a space of unreciprocated exchange and, consequently, challenges attempts to ground it in the imperial ideology of one era or one nation.”<sup>155</sup> And further, that staging “base Indian scenarios” (such as those written about in the *Virginia Gazette* recounting the interruption of *Othello*) reinforced invented or imagined and ultimately unreal character types.<sup>156</sup> Ultimately, Grier rightly suggests the important capitalistic influence theatre wielded as he examines the 1752 staging of *Othello* in Williamsburg and argues that “theater’s artificial persons, capitalism’s fictitious value, and racialism’s invisible essences are not only interwoven but interdependent concepts in the ideological construction of a profitable empire.”<sup>157</sup> According to Grier, “The case of the Cherokee *Othello* challenges theatre historians’ tendency to divorce the racial politics of the colonial stage from those of London’s by encompassing ‘the regional factors *peculiar* to each locale and the transatlantic themes of debate *common* to [them].”<sup>158</sup>

The London Company’s performance of *Othello* was one of the first known plays by Shakespeare to be staged by a group of professional players in America.<sup>159</sup> The *Maryland Gazette* recorded that the evening’s performance, “gave [the Cherokees] great surprise as did the fighting with naked swords on the Stage which occasioned the Empress to order some about her to go and prevent them from killing one another.”<sup>160</sup> The violence of *Othello* seems a questionable choice if Dinwiddie wished to ensure peaceful relations with the Cherokee. It is not surprising that the special Cherokee guests received this violent performance with surprise, along with the message it might suggest. While such uses of theatrical diplomacy had a longstanding tradition in Britain, the practice of using American stages to perform and enhance diplomatic exchanges with Native peoples was unique in 1752.

### **Robert Dinwiddie, Virginia Governor**

Understanding the role of theatre in diplomatic and commercial trade negotiations with the Cherokees is best understood by looking briefly at Dinwiddie and his leadership in Virginia.

When Dinwiddie arrived in Williamsburg, Virginia had not had a resident governor for two years following the departure of William Gooch (1681-1751, Virginia Governor 1727-1749); colonists were ready for an active political presence and clear leadership. In general Virginians were pleased with Dinwiddie's appointment. A notice taken out in the *Virginia Gazette* on 28 November 1751, a week after his arrival, announced that the members of the community were glad to see his arrival;

We, his Majesty's most dutiful and loyal Subjects the Mayor, Recorder, Aldermen, and Common Council of the City of Williamsburg, humbly beg Leave to congratulate your Honour upon you, safe Arrival into this Colony, with your Family, and very heartily to welcome you to this City, the Seat of your Government.<sup>161</sup>

The newly installed Lieutenant-Governor Dinwiddie responded to these comments in a passage also found in the *Virginia Gazette* following that of the correspondence above. He proclaimed his desire to treat the members of the Williamsburg community fairly, stating,

I heartily thank you for your congratulatory Address, on mine and my Family's safe Arrival in this Colony... You may, Gentlemen, depend on my real Regard for the supporting the Rights and Privileges of the City of Williamsburg; and therefore, on all Occasions you may be assured of every Thing in my Power for the Continuance and Enlargement of them.<sup>162</sup>

An experienced colonial, Dinwiddie had resided for several years previously in Virginia, making him even more appealing as a leader. Prior to his appointment as Lieutenant-Governor, between 1749 and 1751, Dinwiddie dwelled in London "as a merchant engaged in trade with the colonies" and thus had created important London contacts.

Once installed as Lieutenant-Governor in Virginia, Dinwiddie set out to establish a working relationship with local native populations, including the Cherokee. Long-associated with his work as a surveyor-general and collector of taxes throughout the transatlantic region for the British government, first in Bermuda and then in the "southern ports of the Continent of America," Dinwiddie understood the monetary importance of a strong trade alliance with his neighbors.<sup>163</sup> Forming trade alliances with Indians was advantageous and socially important for

colonial relations. Dinwiddie also wanted to reach out to neighboring Indian tribes for social and economic stability.<sup>164</sup> The French had enacted gift-giving in trade diplomacy with the Indians, and Dinwiddie included this aspect of cultural exchange in late 1752 in addition to arranging for Lewis Hallam and his company of players to perform *Othello* for the Cherokee delegation. Dinwiddie was at the beginning of his tenure as Lieutenant-Governor and entering into his first round of treaty negotiations with the Cherokee and although he did not remain in power long enough to engage in successful negotiations ultimately with the Cherokee, he did attempt to engage in cultural exchange with them in an effort to establish stronger trade relations.<sup>165</sup> Dinwiddie's negotiations also came at a time of clear antagonism between Indians and colonists. Contemporary newspapers were rife with colorful commentary on Indian negotiations, violence, and increasing tensions between various native groups, the English colonists, and the French traders. In a rather lengthy discussion of recent events between Native peoples, the French and the English, on 27 October 1752, the *Virginia Gazette's* front page reported that "William Trent, Esq; sent by this Government with a Present to the Twightwees, arrived in Town this Week, and gives us the following Account of the Engagement mentioned in our last."<sup>166</sup>

To further understand the place of eighteenth-century Anglophone theatre in establishing a strong diplomatic relationship between the British and Cherokee as Dinwiddie employed it, it is necessary to look briefly at the tradition of Anglo-Cherokee interactions in America that took place several decades earlier. In 1729, Sir Alexander Cumming of Culter, 2<sup>nd</sup> Baronet (1690-1775) traveled to America to meet with the Cherokee leaders under the direction of England's King George II (1727-1760). Cumming's visit came just at the moment that the Cherokee nation contemplated forming an alliance with the French, but with Cumming's physical presence in America, the Cherokees signed a treaty with the English instead. Cumming earned their respect and admiration and in 1730 they "crowned" Cummings commander and chief ruler of the Cherokee.<sup>167</sup>

When Cummings left for England in 1730, he took with him a delegation of seven Cherokee leaders. While Moytoy chose to remain in America, he sent as his representative Attakullakulla (1708-1778), one of his most important warriors and a man who would one day take his place as the Cherokee's First Beloved Man, the title the Cherokee gave their own leader. While in London, Attakullakulla presented King George II with a "crown," in recognition of the importance of the European custom as a way of emphasizing the equality of the British and the Cherokees. He also presented to the king four scalps, a nod to his own Indian traditions. In addition to meetings with King George II, diplomatic relations included theatrical performances. The seven Cherokee delegates stayed in the Covent Garden theatre district and according to the *London Daily Journal News*, "attended plays at the fine theatrical booth, next to the turnpike in Tottenham Court, viewing the play called *Mad Tom of Bedlam, or Distressed Lovers* [by Thomas Dogget]. They then dined at Mr. Figg's at one o'clock, soon after they attended a diversion at Mr. Figg's great room, a boxing match between Felix McGuire of Ireland and Edward Sutton of Kent."<sup>168</sup> Thus long before Robert Dinwiddie used theatre as an important neutral space to enact political, diplomatic and cultural exchanges, theatrical entertainments may have been something the Cherokee group expected from their Anglo neighbors when they were invited to Williamsburg.<sup>169</sup>

Given his interest in fostering a beneficial political and commercial relationship between the Virginians and the Cherokee, Dinwiddie cleverly employed a combination of entertainments (cultural exchange) and gift giving (material goods, a practice the French provided but the British eventually stopped) in his move to establish diplomatic relations, and placed theatrical entertainment at the very center of his diplomatic endeavors.<sup>170</sup> However, Dinwiddie did not remain in office long enough to see the end of the Middle Ground, nor was his use of theatre particularly effective in the end in establishing political and trade alliances with the Cherokees, given the subsequent wars (Anglo-Cherokee Wars that were part of the Seven Years' War between 1758-1761) the Virginian colonists fought with the Cherokees.

## Dinwiddie's Use of Theatre for Diplomacy

In 1752, when Dinwiddie invited his Cherokee guests to celebrate the king's birthday and enjoy a week's entertainments, he was not dictating the rules, but sharing social responsibility and the possibility for cultural exchange. Yet, as Dinwiddie would discover, neutral spaces were becoming increasingly difficult to find and eventually "Indians ceased to have the power to force whites onto the middle ground" thus eroding that neutral space in which natives and colonists could meet without challenge.<sup>171</sup> Firm relations with local tribes, Dinwiddie believed, would allow Virginians to form stronger allies with neighboring tribes, resulting in their ability to fight off the French and ensure Virginia's ability to push west.<sup>172</sup> By December 23, 1755, Dinwiddie pleaded to the Cherokee Emperor;

I am in hopes the Treaty now propos'd to be made...will continue as long as the Sun and Moon Gives Light...That You may remain a happy People. And y't true Love may subsist between You and Y'r Bro's, the Eng., till the End of Time, is my sincere Wish.<sup>173</sup>

Dinwiddie also identified the Cherokees as their close brothers when he wrote to the Catawba Tribe in 1755, asking for their assistance against the French;

Our F'ds and Bro's, the Cherokees, Knowing the Truth thereof, immediately took up the Hatchet ag'st the Fr. And Shawnesse, and sent into our Co'try a No. of their Warriors to protect our Front's and war ag'st those perfidious People...[I] am in hopes You will conclude with them a Treaty of Peace of F'dship, w'ch may continue as long as the Rivers run and Trees grow, w'ch will be confirmed by me and transmitted to our Father the other side of the Great Water.<sup>174</sup>

Sadly, even though they began as allies at the beginning of the French and Indian War (1755-1763), tensions between Virginia colonists and the Cherokee would eventually lead to open hostility, culminating in 1758 with the outbreak of the Anglo-Cherokee war in Virginia. A peace treaty was not signed again between Virginians and the Cherokees until November 1761. Perhaps in hindsight, the numerous betrayals portrayed in *Othello* made this play an intriguing and prescient play to have chosen.

The idea of using the theatre as a contested space in which to help stage negotiations for a peaceful alliance is intriguing.<sup>175</sup> Richard White in *Middle Ground* describes the cultural exchange between colonists and Indians as “accommodation,” allowing a place of mutual adaptation between groups accomplished by reducing hostility and providing a space where compromise was possible. While it might be argued that Dinwiddie’s presence as governor of Virginia was limited—his attempts to establish trade relations with the Cherokee are admirable and his method of including material exchange (in the manner of the French) and cultural exchange (in the manner of the British) suggests thoughtful planning. Providing a space for accommodation suggests that in participating in English performance, the Cherokee learned from the English in this cultural “middle ground,” a space in which interactions were shared but not forced. White argues that colonists “needed the Indians as allies, as partners in exchange, as sexual partners, as friendly neighbors” and thus when Dinwiddie invited the Cherokee to the entertainment, this moment became part negotiation and part mutual accommodation. The *Maryland Gazette* reported in 1754, “The Designs of the *French* must now be evident to every one: They have openly, in Violation of all Treaties, invaded his Majesty’s Territories, and committed the most violent Acts of Hostility, by attacking and entirely defeating the *Virginian* Troops under Col. *Washington*.”<sup>176</sup> Certainly by 1752 America had become a contentious place with Indian, English and French interests vying for political and economic control of various regions. Within two years of this unique performance of *Othello*, colonists would become involved in the French and Indian War (1754-1763) setting English colonists against French traders with Native tribes fighting on both sides.

### **Staging Shakespeare’s *Othello***

Before the staging of *Othello* for the Cherokees, the London Company of Comedians staged another of Shakespeare’s socially fractious plays, *The Merchant of Venice*. For that

*performance*, John Rigby wrote a Prologue in which Rigby made a case for the local acceptance of the London Company of Comedians. Bernard Bailyn would identify this plea as an attempt for the actors to belong to this “permeable” world of eighteenth-century trade networks in the Atlantic world that included actors and their entire fantastical worlds that they brought with them in the form of props, scenery, costumes and plays.<sup>177</sup> Rigby’s Prologue classically appealed to the audience for their good graces and emphasized that Hallam’s company expected the Williamsburg audience to be “sensible, polite and kind” and that they came as players “advent’ring to explore.”<sup>178</sup> The social climate in which the London Company of Comedians found themselves in 1752 could certainly be described as ‘wary of strangers.’ Hallam’s Company would have had to defend themselves against being labeled pretenders (a sin and crime) yet as licensed performers given official permission by Governor Robert Dinwiddie they were officially protected from this charge of “pretenders.”<sup>179</sup> Licenses promoted credibility for ministers, lawyers, as well as actors. Thus the environment into which Mrs. Hallam and her fellow performers landed did not immediately open their arms to the actors but rather appeared anxious, untrusting, and not especially welcoming of performative strangers regardless of their craft.

In addition social ambiguities in America over the role (or even the presence) of women involved with public performances—including actress or audience member—became more fraught throughout the eighteenth century, particularly for theatre-goers in America. Certainly theatre in America was still forming its identity in 1752.<sup>180</sup> As historians Peter Stallybrass and Allon White argue, “It is a transformation of certain material conditions of theatre-going which had been largely, if sometimes grudgingly, accepted and even enjoyed in an unremarked way until the emergence of a bourgeois public sphere and its increasingly phobic relation to the grotesque collective body.”<sup>181</sup> American theatre helped shape diplomatic relationships transatlantically (between colonial North America and Britain), transcolonially (between American colonies), and transculturally (between English colonists, non-Anglo speakers, and Native populations). Ultimately, eighteenth-century Anglophone theatre served as a form of

shared cultural translation. It was frequently attended by audience members for whom English was not their native tongue (French, Dutch, Indian). It was also accessed by English-speaking colonists who wished to experience or reconnect with British culture.

Performing for royalty was not unknown for British actors, even performing for foreign royalty. But performing for Native American royalty, such as the Cherokee “Emperor” and his “Empress,” (terms of importance that Amouskositte and his wife would not have used to refer to themselves but recognized as Anglo terms of leadership), must have been both exciting and anxiety-provoking, especially since they did not know what to expect from their unique audience. Having presented only five previous performances to American audiences, Lewis Hallam’s Company must have been elated to be asked to orchestrate the celebrations in honor of King George’s birthday and to perform before important Cherokee guests, quite possibly their first encounter with any native persons.<sup>182</sup> The theatre space that the London Company of Comedians had purchased was located near the Capitol building but also at the edge of a clearing next to the woods, a location quite alien from the central London theatres in which Hallam and his acting company had recently performed. Mrs. Hallam, who had performed in several London theatres would have likely assessed her new theatre as primitive and isolated. Add to this the inclusion in the audience of a large band of local natives to reinforce the extreme remoteness and sense of remoteness Mrs. Hallam must have felt as she took the stage as Desdemona in the evening’s performance.<sup>183</sup>

### **Cherokee Reaction to *Othello***

Shakespeare’s *Othello* is one of his most violent tragedies. In fact, the violence in *Othello* resonates with the onstage death of at least four characters, Othello’s strangulation of Desdemona is the most horrific and disturbing of these murders, and a difficult scene to watch for any audience member. Yet when the *Virginia Gazette* remarked on the horrified reaction of the “Empress” to the play’s violence, they reflect contemporary Anglo-American views that the

Cherokee were immature and lacking in social etiquette or civility.<sup>184</sup> While the reaction of Amouskositte's wife "to order some about her to prevent their killing one another" might have gone unheeded in London where plays were often interrupted by the raucous crowds, it was well noted in Williamsburg and also suggests that "American" theatre decorum dictated a clear separation between players and audience and that plays should not be interrupted in such a fashion. As an honored guest and the wife of the Cherokee Leader, Amouskositte's wife was an important part of the diplomatic process and her willingness to speak out and interrupt the play suggests her own assumed power and feelings of importance in the Anglo-Indian interactions.<sup>185</sup>

Grier suggests that Amouskositte's wife may have been quite familiar with British theatrical practices as passed down from Attakullakulla when he visited London in 1730<sup>186</sup> and as such I would posit that she would have known to engage with the players onstage, even if it meant calling for a disruption of the performance—perhaps even as a calculated response to show her own assertion of power and ability to command players to cease their action. Certainly she did not sit quietly as an impassive spectator but engaged both with the players and with the audience, ultimately crafting her own narrative performance that resulted in her own response being recorded and memorialized and thus truly becoming the star of the night's performance.<sup>187</sup> "Contrary to the consensus historians," Grier argues, "theater was not a negligible aspect of Anglo-Indian negotiations."<sup>188</sup>

Whether or not the character of Othello appeared in blackface during this particular production is unknown, though it was commonly performed that way during the eighteenth century in London.<sup>189</sup> Colonial newspapers make no comment about the particular staging or costuming of performers in the 1752 production of *Othello*, and while likely to have been the case, it has no confirmation or evidence of having been produced in this way. Certainly imagining a black-faced Othello onstage makes it easier to see the conflation of manufactured racial ideology in the 1752 staging of *Othello* in Williamsburg both in the racially charged presentation

of Othello's blackness as a Moor and the Cherokee misunderstanding of performative (v. real) violence in Amouskositte's wife's response and interruption of the performance.

In all innocence, *Othello* may have chosen it because partly of its relative familiarity and popularity with Anglo audiences. It may have even been the London Company's strongest performance on offer.<sup>190</sup> Dinwiddie, who had lived in London from 1749-1751, may have also seen one of the eight performances of *Othello* that took place in 1749, one of the five performances in 1750 or one of the eight performances of *Othello* that London theatres presented through April 1751 before he left for Virginia.<sup>191</sup> However, well-versed in the plays of Shakespeare, Hallam's Company could have performed any number of Shakespeare's plays, and indeed did perform many of Shakespeare's plays during their decades on American stages including *The Merchant of Venice*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Richard III*. Othello, the dark-skinned Moor, may have been thought to provide an "identifiable" character for Dinwiddie's guests—in the highly racialized and tropic manner assumed by Anglo audiences. The play's themes may have also served as a subtle reminder that races might work together but should not cohabit. Or perhaps it could serve as a warning that double-dealings would be dealt with severely. On the other hand, Dinwiddie wanted to impress his guests with the best performance the London Company of Comedians had on offer and it is possible that Dinwiddie (or Hallam) came to the conclusion that the Cherokee leader and his entourage might better understand a tragedy based on action rather than a comedy based on dialogue requiring a deeper understanding of English. Whatever the reasons for choosing this performance it is certain that even though the audience was sharing the same performance they were not sharing the same experience. *The Virginia Gazette* commented on the visitors' reactions to *Othello* saying that the play "gave them great Surprise, as did the fighting with naked Swords on the Stage, which occasioned the Empress to order some about her to prevent their killing one another."<sup>192</sup>

Mrs. Hallam's job that evening was first and foremost to entertain. Her performance as Desdemona, one she had regularly performed in London (she had last made her London

appearance as Desdemona at the Lemon Street House Theatre on 5 September 1751), was likely convincing.<sup>193</sup> Accustomed to the public engaging with performers during a play in Britain, it is unlikely that Mrs. Hallam was perturbed by such an outbreak. In fact, if *Othello* stirred up emotions in the audience, that was all the better for Hallam. He wanted audiences to remember these performances; he wanted them to return. Controversy made people talk, socially and politically contentious theatre often drew audiences, large audiences helped pay the bills. It is also not surprising that the themes of jealousy, deception, and murder in Shakespeare's *Othello* caused the Cherokee leader Amouskositte's wife to command her warriors to stop the action onstage at moments such as when the outraged Othello believing Desdemona unfaithful roars, "I will chop her into messes. Cuckhold me!" (IV. i. 200) Even if she knew it was a staged performance the horrible nature of the murder and what it might have symbolized could have easily caused her to be outraged that Dinwiddie might have chosen such an entertainment.

When Desdemona unsuccessfully pleads for her life moreover, it is also possible that the Cherokee chief's partner saw herself in particular and women in general in the vulnerable position as victims of male violence. Or, reciprocally, the play's murder may have suggested that men should be protectors of women, not their murderers. Assuming that the *Virginia Gazette's* report of the evening's events is accurate, the manner in which Amouskositte's wife engaged with the performers onstage and commanded her warriors to make them stop also changed the performance's meaning for the rest of the audience who might have been more immured to the violence and knew what to expect.<sup>194</sup> Indeed, her reactions and hers alone were commented on more than the performance itself, or those of any other attendees. Also, her interruption of the play led to a far more memorable performance that evening than what was planned and suggests both how different cultures interpreted the same events and how Anglo culture was so very different from the experiences of many individuals in America—and not just the Cherokees.

This activity of Indian watching, Grier points out was well in place by 1752, with such Anglo-interactions being recorded when Mohawks and Mohicans visited London in 1710, and

subsequent Cherokee interactions in 1730 that drew in London crowds, resulted in multiple newspaper commentaries, and became part of general London gossip.<sup>195</sup> Because theatre served as a significant form of cultural and political diplomacy at a time when Anglo-Indian and Anglo-European relations were quite tentative and fractious, theatre served as an important cultural diplomatic tool through which important political and economic negotiations might take place. Theatre attempted to create a neutral space where audience and performers shared in cultural banter and where a small band of well-trained pretenders might both challenge cultural beliefs and establish cultural connections between otherwise disparate groups.

### **Conclusions: Theatrical Diplomacy and American Character**

The twenty-year period between 1752 and 1772 was transformative for American theatre both in how audiences saw plays and players and what theatrical companies performed. David Douglass's renamed American Company allowed audiences to see that culture might help shape their national identity and that theatre might be used to publicly display American voices and eventually American performers.<sup>196</sup> Because American theatre successfully served to establish and maintain cultural ties with Britain and worked as a relatively neutral social and cultural meeting place to engage in diplomatic relations between Americans, various colonists, and Native peoples, particularly the Cherokee Nation, it served a politically significant function as well.

American theatre also rivaled newspapers in informing and entertaining local citizens by showcasing the latest literary successes on the London stage, showing new fashions, and introducing changes to theatre construction and staging as styles of performance changed. Because these companies actively engaged new performers, new celebrity faces emerged. Theatre, like newspapers, also began to present important contemporary political and social issues and "American" themes like liberty, freedom, equality began to appear onstage. Theatre even

served as a space for inter-colonial conflicts as various colonial identities, loyalties, and preferences arose. Most important for this study, American theatre gave women a public voice and an audience to listen, as they wrote or performed plays.

Over four decades, the London/American Company entertained audiences in spite of religious and social intolerance, economic challenges, and distain for British goods and services that preceded and lasted for over ten years. In so doing, the London/American Company made theatre a venue through which Anglo-Americans could maintain cultural ties with Britain, non-Britons in America might experience British culture, and allowed Americans to recognize an effective mode for crafting a cohesive national identity and character. When Lewis Hallam's London Company of Comedians set out to make a place for themselves in America in 1752, they did so with an eye toward establishing theatre as a legitimate money-making enterprise. Surviving an agent who absconded with funds to establish a place for the London Company, undergoing various reconfigurations in the company itself including taking on new managers and a new name, the London/American Company performed for Cherokee royalty, traveled thousands of miles within the transatlantic world, constructed or renovated a score of buildings into semi-permanent or permanent theatre structures, staged Thomas Godfrey's *Prince of Parthia*, the first play written by an American-born author, and cleverly survived a ten-year theatre ban enacted by the Continental Congress during the American Revolution by escaping to Jamaica where they continued to practice and perform until the Revolution ended in 1783. Returning to New York after the American Revolution, the American Company lost no time choosing performances that allowed the Company to gain its American audience's sympathies and helped define "American" character.

But American theatre was not just about performance. It was also about language, character, and themes. In 1753, a French officer stationed in New Orleans, LeBlanc de Villeneuve, wrote the first play to focus on Native figures in America, *Le Pere-Indien*.<sup>197</sup> In

January 1766, Major Robert Rogers of New England, published his tragedy *Ponteach, or, The Savages of America: a tragedy*,” the second drama written by an “American” author.<sup>198</sup>

Thomas Godfrey’s 1767 tragedy, *The Prince of Parthia*, introduced the idea that American-born individuals might write their own plays and shortly thereafter, American playwrights began to experiment with drama. Mercy Otis Warren published her polemical plays in newspapers during the American Revolution, and Lewis Hallam, Jr., produced Royall Tyler’s play, *The Contrast*, in 1787 in New York at the John’s Street Theatre. These new plays focused on particularly compelling American events or characters. They increasingly addressed important American themes like liberty, equality, and freedom, new playwrights in America began to incorporate “American” characters in their plays, including Indians.

By the end of the eighteenth century, instead of watching in the audience, America’s native populations were transformed onto the stage. Indians emerged as some of the most significant “American” characters, emerging in plays like *Tammany; or, the Indian Chief, a Serious Opera*, which staged a respectable four performances between 3 March 1794 and 11 April 1794.<sup>199</sup> Written by Ann Julia Kemble Hatton (1764-1838), a member of the famous Kemble acting family and sister of British actresses Sarah Siddons and Elizabeth Whitlock (who performed with great success in America), Hatton’s play, like many writings of the period, promoted Indian stereotypes and the idea of the Noble Savage.<sup>200</sup> Hatton’s characterization of Tammany also “translated” the Indian ideal suggested when Tammany states, “The sun sets in night and stars shun the day / But unfading glory can never decay / You white men deceivers, your smiles are in vain / The son of Alkmoonac shall ne’er wear your chain.” As a recent immigrant to America herself, Hatton also “translated” her own cultural differences and her differences as a woman and projected them onto the noble (and overly stereotyped) Chief Tammany.

Theatre continued to serve as a symbol of Britishness and British culture that was both embraced and denigrated by local American audiences between 1752 and 1800, though I argue

that politically motivated government officials helped to legitimize theatre in America in an effort to assert their Britishness.<sup>201</sup> As long as performers on American stages remained morally upright, local officials gave them license to continue. This cultural and political association of theatre with Britain would eventually cause setbacks in the expansion and legitimization of American theatre between 1774 and 1783 when the Second Continental Congress made theatre illegal (mostly because of its association with Britain), forcing acting companies to leave if they wished to survive.<sup>202</sup> While America theatre certainly embraced its Anglo-cultural connections with British theatre and paid homage to British theatre's roots in continuing to stage plays by Shakespeare, David Garrick, Susanna Centlivre, and Hannah Cowley during the last half of the eighteenth century, it did not take long for playwrights and performers in America to see that just as theatre had been used as a powerful tool by the British to assert British culture throughout the transatlantic world, so might American theatre be used in the same way to assert an American identity, promote American themes, craft uniquely American characters and allow the American public its own culturally savvy and imaginative theatrical platform from which a variety of voices, concerns, and beliefs might be heard.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> The Act limited the publication and production of new plays in London, creating a dearth of socially challenging plays in Britain for much of the remaining eighteenth century by making it more difficult for new plays to be approved.<sup>1</sup> Plays appearing as "new" were often revisions of previous productions, like David Garrick's adaptations of Shakespeare. See David Garrick, *David Garrick: Garrick's adaptations of Shakespeare 1744-1756* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980).

<sup>2</sup> Following the Theatre Licensing Act of 1737 most touring companies limited themselves to popular staples: Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Othello* and *Richard III*; George Farquhar's comedies, *The Constant Couple*, *The Recruiting Officer*, *Twin Rivals*; Collie Cibber's comedy, *The Careless Husband*; Richard Steele's comedy, *The Conscious Lovers*; Nicholas Rowe's tragedy *Jane Shore*, as well as *Tamerlane* and *The Fair Penitent*; John Vanbrugh's *The Provoked Husband*, Nathaniel Lee's tragedy, *Theodosius; or, The Force of Love*; Henry Fielding's comedy, *The Mock Doctor*; and a trio of comedies by David Garrick, one of the most successful writers of "new" plays during this period: *Lethe*, *The Lying Valet*, and *Miss in Her Teens*. The plays of Centlivre and Behn also remained popular though they were less regularly performed outside of England.

<sup>3</sup> While little is known about early Caribbean acting companies, it is known that English actors performed around the Caribbean during the last half of the eighteenth century. A Leeward Islands company remained active during the 1770s, performing standard Shakespearean plays *King Lear* and *Richard II* at Christiansted, Danish West Indies on the same day in 1771, and Thomas Otway's *Venice Preserv'd* was performed in Antigua in 1788. Martin Banham, *The Cambridge Guide to Theatre* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 319.

<sup>4</sup> Miles P. Grier, "Staging the Cherokee *Othello*: An Imperial Economy of Indian Watching," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 73, No. 1 (January 2016), 73-106; 77-78.

<sup>5</sup> Women contributed to theatre in Jamaica as actresses, supportive members of the touring company and in the case of one Jamaican woman, as Mistress of the Revels. Teresia Constantia Phillips, a memoirist from London who became infamous for her *Apology for the Conduct of Mrs. Teresia Constantia Phillips* published in 1748 and who was, more importantly for this narrative, appointed as Mistress of the Revels in Jamaica in 1757-1758. As no other woman appears to have been appointed Master or Mistress of the Revels for any other Anglophone location, the appointment of Teresia "Con" Phillips was both unique in its occurrence and important in the development of women's roles in theatre during the eighteenth century, although aside from this appointment, Phillips appears to have had little to do with theatre. Creating the office of Master of the Revels in Jamaica may have been an attempt by the British to bring under control all theatrical amusements in the British Empire. Mistress of the Revels was an office that included specific duties, including authority over all theatrical public performances in Jamaica as well as organization of balls and entertainments given by the Governor. It was not until Henry VIII, who enjoyed theatre immensely, that the office of Master of the Revels was made to be in charge of royal entertainments. In Elizabeth's time, the office included plays and professional actors throughout the kingdom and licensed plays and acting companies. It also censored plays to remove "all prophaneness, oaths, ribaldry" according to Master of the Revels Sir Henry Herbert. See Richardson Wright, *Revels in Jamaica 1682-1838*, (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1938), 21. The last officeholder of Master of the Revels was Thomas Dennis in 1822, who joined the ranks of several famous and infamous previous office holders. Other office holders included David Douglass in 1779, Lewis Hallam 1781-1783, Henry Andrew Francken in 1784 and 1793-1795, William Smith 1785-1791 and Teresia Constantia Phillips 1757-1758. Douglass and another man, William Aikman, were appointed "King's Printer for Jamaica and its dependencies" and he was appointed Master of the Revels in 1779 as previously mentioned. Also in 1779, Douglass and Aikman published *Jamaica Mercury and Kingston Weekly Advertiser*, known from 1780 on as the *Royal Gazette*. Certainly running a newspaper and being in charge of theatrical affairs in Jamaica must have had its benefits. Douglass is said to have amassed a fortune of 25,000 £ and when he died in 1789, his death certificate listed him as "a gentleman." See Wright, *Revels in Jamaica*, 21-22, 28.

<sup>6</sup> Rob Canfield argues that "the American Company of Comedians, driven out of America, presented in Jamaica during the period 1774-84 annual seasons of unprecedented activity...Hallam's production of popular English plays on the margins of this appropriated stage belies the ideologies of these initial representations and the politics, perhaps, of Revolutionary American theater." Thus the Caribbean (particularly Jamaica) became a place where in the "American" Company exchanged Anglophone culture with local residents and possibly even engaged in American political discourse as they lived and performed in the Caribbean during the American Revolution. Canfield further argues "the ironies of these outcast and marooned theatre groups and the discourses of erasure which comprise congressional censure seem especially dark in light of the realities of the West Indies in the eighteenth century"<sup>6</sup> and posits that "such theaters would be banished from a decolonizing effort and from a struggle for freedom and equality only to replay such imaginings within and upon the very arenas of colonial acquisition and acculturation indicates not only a perpetuation of dissembling theatricalizations, but also the initial rumblings of a relationship between American theaters that would manifest itself in future supplantations." Thus while the displacement of acting companies from America ultimately reinforced differences between American and British theatre, these differences, I argue, would manifest themselves several decades after the termination of the American Revolution. See Rob Canfield, "Theatralizing the Anglophone Caribbean, 1492-1980s," in *A History of Literature in the Caribbean: English and Dutch-speaking Countries* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 2001), 292-293.

<sup>7</sup> David Armitage, “Three Concepts of Atlantic History” in Idem. and Michael Braddick eds., *The British Atlantic World* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); and Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concept and Contours* (Cambridge, MA Harvard University Press, 2005).

<sup>8</sup> Daniel O’Quinn, *Staging Governance: Theatrical Imperialism in London, 1770-1800* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 11.

<sup>9</sup> Grier, “Staging the Cherokee *Othello*,” 78.

<sup>10</sup> O’Quinn, *Staging Governance*, 11.

<sup>11</sup> See Harvey Young, *Theatre and Race* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Virginia Mason Vaughan, *Performing Blackness on English Stages, 1500-1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Elaine M. McGitt, *Eighteenth-Century Characters: A Guide to Literature of the Age* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

<sup>12</sup> Grier points out potential discrepancies in Shakespeare’s first and second quartos which have Othello identifying himself with the base Indian rather than in the First Folio in which Othello associates himself with the “base Judean” or Judean. Either way, Shakespeare’s racialized description is apparent, though certainly if the London Company presented the former “base Indian” comment, it would have been more forceful as a strong contemporary commentary for Williamsburg audience members during the 1752 performance. Grier, “Staging the Cherokee *Othello*,” 81.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 90. See also Colin G. Calloway, *Pen and Ink Witchcraft: Treaties and Treaty Making in American Indian History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>14</sup> Kathleen Wilson, “The Performance of Freedom: Maroons and the Colonial Order in Eighteenth-Century Jamaica and the Atlantic Sound,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 66, N. 1 (January 2009): 45-86; 49.

<sup>15</sup> Othello claims Desdemona’s infidelity rests in his discovery of a handkerchief he gave her in the hands of Cassio and Emilia tells him that she had found Desdemona’s handkerchief and had given it to Iago who had asked her to steal it and planted it for Othello to find. Shakespeare, *Othello*, Act 5, Scene 2, 238. Jeffrey H. Richards, *Drama, Theatre, and Identity in the American New Republic* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 24.

<sup>16</sup> See Odai Johnson, *Absence and Memory in Colonial American Theatre: Fiorelli’s Plaster* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 235. As one of the preeminent American theatre historians, Johnson’s work argues that American characters were not often represented on the American stage, such as the poor white, the enslaved African, Dutch merchants, Indians, and frontiersmen. He sees Indians as a type portrayed on the London stage but not often on the American stage, and further argues that plays performed in America were highly metropolitan rather than plays that reflected any significant American character.

<sup>17</sup> Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution*, xv.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, xvii. Breen sees that, “what ultimately separated the modern period from traditional history was the ability of ordinary men and women to establish a meaningful and distinct sense of self through the exercise of individual choice, a process of ever more egalitarian self-fashioning that was itself the foundation of a late eighteenth-century liberal society.” Ibid, 55.

<sup>19</sup> Anglophone theatre becomes a critical site of cultural discourse during this period. For additional comments on culture and identity see Lisa A. Freeman, *Character’s Theater: Genre and Identity on the Eighteenth-Century English Stage* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

<sup>20</sup> Bernard Bailyn describes the “permeable” world of interconnected trade networks and migration in which actors and plays, along with their sets, props, costumes and even their architectural practices in theatre construction evidenced in American and Caribbean playhouses. Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concept and Contours* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005), 83.

<sup>21</sup> John Moody and David Douglass had a theatre company already established in Jamaica when the Hallam’s group passed through. Jamaica would become a refuge and a place for the company to recruit

new performers during the next three decades. Fighting against economic and religious restrictions and growing nationalistic tendencies, by 1763 Douglass renamed the London Company the American Company, in deference to the growing tide of dissatisfaction amongst many colonial Americans for British imported goods and services. Attempting to use nationalism to further his troupe's success, Douglass's American Company continued their tour west and south (New England did not embrace theatre with much interest until the 1790s), building theatres as they traveled and performing the first plays written by American authors.

<sup>22</sup>The establishment of a public theatre occurred just a dozen years after Jamaica was ceded to the English and ten years before a devastating tidal wave and earthquake destroyed Port Royal. A list of original Jamaican plays of the late eighteenth century suggests a strong attempt to compose plays that said something about Jamaican life, though some plays were simply published in local papers rather than being performed. Dramatists who did speak of the Jamaican or West Indian experience can be connected to the anti-slavery campaign in England; according to secondary sources, these authors had not traveled to Jamaica and thus they were often unfamiliar with Jamaican life themselves. Beginning in 1780, the American Company presented *Theatrical Candidates, a farce, School for Soldiers, or The Deserter, a four-act drama* by John Henry of the American Company; *A West Indian Lady's Arrival in London*, a farce by Margaret Cheer Cameron<sup>22</sup> of the American Company; *The Kingston Privateer*, an adaptation by the American Company of *The Liverpool Prize*, by Frederick Pilon. *Scandal Club, or Virtue in Danger*, a comedy "by a West Indian Lady" was presented by the American Company in 1782, and *Dialogue between a Poet and a Doctor* appeared in the *Daily Advertiser* as being presented in July, 1790. Richard Chamberlain's *The West Indian* (1771) and George Colman the Younger's operetta *Inkle and Yarico* (1787) also make mention of Jamaica. *Inkle and Yarico* was one of the period's most successful operas in the transatlantic world, and was produced in Jamaica a year after it opened in England. The play was also performed in Dublin (1787), New York (1789), Philadelphia (1790), Calcutta (1791) and Boston (1794). In it, Yarico, the beautiful African girl, saves the life of the English adventurer Inkle, with whom Yarico falls in love. The role of Yarico in Colman's very popular play drew on the talents of many great actresses and became Elizabeth Satchell Kemble's (1763-1841) most famous role, one which prompted the comment that Kemble was "universally" the best Yarico "ever seen." The popularity of this play across the Atlantic world suggests that Anglophone audiences were informed and interested in of important social, cultural and political issues. Certainly the presentation of a marriage between a white man and an African woman would have provoked much commentary in Philadelphia, Boston and New York, places where slavery was a hotly debated issue. The theme of *Inkle and Yarico* was meant to stimulate an awakening sympathy of the British public on behalf of the friendless and fettered black slaves. According to Francis Hanson's account of Jamaican Laws and island occurrences, "All gentlemen's coaches (which are there very numerous) go with six Horses apiece; we have also several Hackney Coaches. The Manner of living there for Gallantry, Good Housekeeping and Recreations (as Horse Races, Bowls, Dancing, Musick, Plays at a Publick Theatre, etc.) sufficiently demonstrate the flourishing condition of the island." See Francis Hanson, William Wood (of Jamaica), et. al., *The laws of Jamaica: comprehending all the acts in force, passed between the thirty-second year of the reign of King Charles the Second, and the [eleventh] year of the reign of [King George the Fourth], inclusive [1681-1830]: To which is prefixed, a table of he titles of the public and private acts passed during that time, Volume 6, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, (Alexander Aikman, Jun.: Jamaica, 1792) as quoted in Richardson Wright, *Revels in Jamaica*, (Dodd, Mead & Company: New York, 1937), 6.

<sup>23</sup> Kenneth Silverman, *A Cultural History of the American Revolution* (New York: T.Y. Cowell, 1976), 94-98.

<sup>24</sup> The entire resolution passed under the Articles of Association concerning theatre is as follows: "8. We will, in our several stations, encourage frugality, economy, and industry, and promote agriculture, arts and the manufactures of this country, especially that of wool; and will discountenance and discourage every species of extravagance and dissipation, especially all horse-racing, and all kinds of games, cock fighting, exhibitions of shews, plays, and other expensive diversions and entertainments; and on the death of any relation or friend, none of us, or any of our families will go into any further mourning-dress, than a black crepe or ribbon on the arm or hat, for gentlemen, and a black ribbon and necklace for ladies, and we will discontinue the giving of gloves and scarves at funerals." See Worthington Chauncy Ford, ed., "Thursday

October 20, 1774" Journals of the Continental Congress: 1774-1789, Volume I. 1774, 34 vols., (Washington D.C., Library of Congress Government Printing Office, 1904), 76, 78. For the full Article of Association document, see also [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/contcong\\_10-20-74.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/contcong_10-20-74.asp) See Don B. Wilmeth, et. al., *The Cambridge History of American Theatre: 1870-1945, Volume 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 5. The ban on theatre was not lifted until 1789 though British military personnel continued to present theatrical performances throughout the American Revolution. In 1774 Mrs. (Hallam) Douglass, the American Company's principal performer and the actresses who may have asserted the most cultural influence in American theatre between 1752 and 1772, died.

<sup>25</sup> Dwayne W. Pickett, Margaret W. Cooper, and Martha McCartney, "*The Old Theatre Near the Capital*": *Archaeological and Documentary Investigations into the Site of the Third Theatre*, 1998. Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Library Research Report Series – 1676, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, Virginia, 2003, 4.

<sup>26</sup> French name for Spanish coin worth about twelve British pounds.

<sup>27</sup> *The Virginia Gazette*, 29 August 1751, 3.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

<sup>29</sup> Walter Murray and Thomas Kean were members of this company coming from New York. *The Virginia Gazette*, 26 September 1751, 4.

<sup>30</sup> *The Virginia Gazette*, 17 October 1751, 3.

<sup>31</sup> *The Virginia Gazette*, 24 October 1751, 3.

<sup>32</sup> *The Virginia Gazette* on 21 October 1751 commented "On Monday a Company of Comedians opened at the New Theatre near the Capitol in Williamsburg with "King Richard III" and a tragic dance composed by Monsieur Denoyer called "The Royal Captive." See *The Virginia Gazette* on 21 October 1751, 3.

<sup>33</sup> According to George O. Seilhamer, Kean is said to have been the first actor to attempt the role of Shakespeare's *Richard III* on an American stage. Murray represents the transatlantic itinerant actor. Born in Ireland, he died in Quebec, having traveled as an actor-manager throughout British North America. Clearly his background as an actor did not damage his reputation. Murray was sworn in as member of the first Council of Quebec on August 13, 1764, and as justice of the peace less than two weeks later. See George Oberkirsh Seilhamer, *History of the American Theatre before the Revolution 1749-1774*, Philadelphia: Globe Printing House, 1888), 5.

<sup>34</sup> Also appearing in the Murray-Kean Company for the 1750 New York season were Mrs. Leigh and Miss Osborne. Mrs. Beccoley eventually left the Murray-Kean Company and by 1754 was appearing with Lewis Hallam's Company in Philadelphia. See Harry E. Kollatz, "Colonial Theatre Historical Report, Block 29 Building 17A; Part II—A Walking Shadow: A General History of the Colonial Theatre in Williamsburg, Virginia (Williamsburg, VA: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Library Research Report Series 299, 1990) and Thomas C. Pollock, *The Philadelphia Theatre in the Eighteenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1933), 74-75.

<sup>35</sup> *The Virginia Gazette*, 24 October 1751, 2. Charles Somerset Woodham married the actress Mary William Daniel after the death of her husband. The Daniels had gone to Kingston, Jamaica to join John Moody's acting company in 1749. Woodham had been Mary Daniel's husband's executor and inherited his printing business. Woodham (said to be from New York) also performed with the Murray-Kean Company in Williamsburg. See Philip H. Highfill et. al., *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers and Other Stage Personnel in London, 1660-1800*, Volume 4 (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1975), 141.

<sup>36</sup> *The Virginia Gazette*, 17 April 1752, 3.

<sup>37</sup> *The Virginia Gazette* 30 April 1752, 3.

<sup>38</sup> Lewis Hallam took out this notice in the *New York Gazette* in August 1753. As quoted in Thomas Allston Brown, *The New York Stage from the First Performance in 1732 to 1900* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1903), 4.

<sup>39</sup> Lewis Hallam took out this notice in the *New York Gazette* in August 1753. As quoted in Brown, *The New York Stage from the First Performance in 1732 to 1900*, 4.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> This performance was followed by David Garrick's (1717-1779) first work and a much lighter farce, *Lethe; or, Aesop in the Shade* (1740).

<sup>42</sup> The role of Belvidera helped define the talents of Restoration actress Elizabeth Barry and a role that Sarah Siddons revived with great success in London at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane in 1782 and at the Covent Garden Theatre in 1784. Otway's play was initially written during a tumultuous political period in the wake of the discovery of the Popish Plot, a failed attempt by a group of Roman Catholics to assassinate Charles II and replace him with his Catholic brother, James, Duke of York. Belvidera becomes an important character in Otway's play, indeed seems to very voice of reason and rationality. It is through her voice that Otway is shown to condemn the conspiracy as well as the Whigs who attempted to stop it when she cries out: "Nay, be a traitor too, and sell thy country? /Can thy great heart descend so vilely low, /Mix with hired slaves, bravoos, and common stabbers, /Nose-slitters, alley-lurking villains? Join /With such a crew . . . /To cut the throats of wretches as they sleep? (*Venice Preserv'd*, 3.2.159-64). Belvidera shows disdain both for conspirators and for those who seek to stop them.

<sup>43</sup> Thomas Hallam, stayed away from acting and joined the military, eventually rising to naval admiral.

<sup>44</sup> Adam Hallam was married first to Elizabeth Carter (m. 22 May 1738) who died 9 June 1740. There is no record of Elizabeth Carter appearing on the London stage. Adam subsequently married Isabella Agar "spinster, 25 years old" on 2 November 1743. Lewis Hallam's wife, the as of yet still unidentified "Mrs. Hallam" was Lewis's only wife and accompanied him on tour to America. See Philip H. Highfill et. al. *Habgood to Houbert, A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers, and Other Stage Personnel in London, 1660-1800, Volume 7* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1982), 32.

<sup>45</sup> The Hallams' daughter (Sarah or Helen) performed briefly with the London Company on their American tour before returning to England after two years to join her younger sister, Isabella, who was left behind in London to be raised by Lewis Hallam Sr.'s sister and brother-in-law, Ann Barrington and her husband John, both popular actors at London's Covent Garden Theatre. See Highfill, et. al., *Biographical Dictionary of Actors*, 33.

<sup>46</sup> Their journey following a common path from Africa to the Caribbean that most vessels crossing the Atlantic chose to undertake during the period due to favorable winds, calmer seas and places to stop if they needed to take on supplies.

<sup>47</sup> Sailing from Virginia back to England took less time since the route was more direct with ships catching the northern westerly winds as they hugged the North American coast line before sailing east to England. Colonial Williamsburg cites the name of the ship on which Hallam's company arrived on the *Laughing Sally*. It has also been identified as *Charming Sally*. See Dwayne W. Pickett, Margaret W. Cooper, and Martha McCartney, "*The Old Theatre Near the Capital*": *Archaeological and Documentary Investigations into the Site of the Third Theatre*, 1998. Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Library Research Report Series – 1676, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, Virginia, 2003, 4. Also, the name of the afterpiece they were ready to perform was the anonymously written speaking pantomime *Harlequin Collector: or the Miller Deceived*. Pantomimes were traditionally performed with gestures accompanied by music.

<sup>47</sup> Pickett, et. al, "*The Old Theatre Near the Capital*": 6.

<sup>48</sup> At some point Lewis and his wife were married, or formed a permanent relationship, and had four children by the time they left for America in 1752. The eldest, Lewis Hallam, Jr. was born in 1740, which

suggests that Lewis Hallam and his wife they were together at least by then, whether married or not. Other members of the company at that time included Mr. and Mrs. Clarkson, Mr. and Mrs. Adcock, Mr. and Mrs. Rigby, poet and musician John Singleton, Patrick Malone, Mr. Herbert, Mr. Wynell, Mrs. Hallam who was the company's leading lady, Lewis Hallam, Sr. known as a "low comedian," and three of the Hallam's children: twelve-year-old Lewis Jr., ten-year-old Adam and eight-year-old Sarah (or Helen). Joseph Norton Ireland, *Records of the New York Stage: from 1750 to 1860, Volume 1* (New York: T. H. Morrell, 1866), 17.

<sup>49</sup> *The Virginia Gazette*, 12 June 1752, 2. <http://research.history.org/DigitalLibrary/va-gazettes/VGSingleImage.cfm?ID=1199&res=LO>. Accessed 1 February 2015. Following Hallam's advertisement was one placed by John Singleton, also a member of the London Company of Comedians who announced his availability as teacher of violin to students in York, Hampton and Norfolk, Virginia at the cost of one *Pistole* a month and one *Pistole* entrance fee as long as at least six students in each place requested his services. "That Mr. Hallam, from the New Theatre in Goodmansfields, is daily expected here with a select Company of Comedians, the Scenes, Cloaths [sic] and Decorations are all entirely new, extremely rich and finished in the highest Taste, the Scenes being painted by the best Hands in London are excell'd by none in Beauty and Elegance, so that the Ladies and Gentlemen may depend on being entertain'd in as polite a Manner as at the Theatres in London, the Company being perfected in all the best Plays, Opera's, Farces, and Pantomimes, that have been exhibited in any of the Theatres for these ten years past." This advertisement also suggests that Hallam's company were set on making themselves part of the local community. See *Virginia Gazette*, 12 June 1752, 3.

<sup>50</sup> The Governor's Council had just rejected a bill that would have prevented performances within a two mile radius of the capital suggesting they were still open to the idea of allowing public performances to continue in Williamsburg. Hallam's company remained in Virginia for eleven months before venturing up north to New York, where they used Dinwiddie's letter of permission to perform in Virginia to obtain permission to perform in New York.

<sup>51</sup> Having invested in the conversion of a storage house into a theatre with a box, pit, balcony and gallery for various audience members, the London Company remained in Williamsburg for eleven months, performing twice weekly. However, Williamsburg in 1753 was a small town incapable of maintaining a permanent theatre and the London Company soon moved north where they eventually found more engaged audiences in Philadelphia and New York. Although Virginians were not morally averse to theatre, they did have daily events that kept them occupied, primarily their interactions and negotiations with the Cherokees, Twightees, Mingoos and Shawnees, whose actions filled the *Virginia Gazette* as a form of community entertainment. The London Company of Comedians maintained a very provisional hold on success and survived only by traveling from location to location in search of supportive audiences, a feat not particularly easy in morally conservative British North America in the 1750s and 1760s.

<sup>52</sup> *The Virginia Gazette*, 21 August 1752, 2. Subsequent theatres that Lewis Hallam constructed after his 1752 arrival in America contained deferential seating—boxes for better paying customers, pit, balconies and gallery for those who could not afford more expensive seating. See Dwayne W. Pickett, Margaret W. Cooper, and Martha McCartney, *"The Old Theatre Near the Capital": Archaeological and Documentary Investigations into the Site of the Third Theatre*, 1998. Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Library Research Report Series – 1676, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, Virginia, 2003, 4.

<sup>53</sup> England adopted the Gregorian calendar in 1752 and Parliament decreed that Wednesday, 2 September would be thereby followed by Thursday 14 September, thus losing eleven days. Hallam's advertisement appeared on Friday, 28 August just one week before their initial performance.

<sup>54</sup> Hallam charged 7shillings 6 pence for boxes, 5 shillings 9 pence for pit and balconies, and 3 shillings 9 pence for gallery places. The announcement for the performance on 28 August was not as early as the dates might indicate. In September 1752, Great Britain (and thus the American colonies) switched to the Gregorian calendar and the eleven days between 2 September 1752 and 15 September 1752 were omitted

from the calendar. Thus September 15 on the new calendar was really only one week (on the new calendar) later.

<sup>55</sup> See Highfill, et. al., *Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Volume Seven*, 36. Lewis's brother, Adam, seems not have made an appearance in this production. No mention of his name appears in print, though at least seventeen roles exist in this play and only thirteen players comprised Hallam's company at the time, so it is plausible that Adam Hallam did appear as an unnamed suitor, court officer or attendant. See William Dunlap, *A History of the American Theatre from Its Origins to 1832*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 12

<sup>56</sup> *Virginia Gazette*, 22 September 1752, 3.

<sup>57</sup> The population of Williamsburg in 1748, four years before Dinwiddie's arrival was documented as approximately 885 persons. This number was given from a study on the effects of smallpox on Williamsburg, in which at least 754 residents contracted the disease and over 53 persons died from it, reducing the population by 5 percent. See Virginia Miscellaneous Manuscripts, Box 1 (1606-1772), Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C. (unpublished paper, Department of Historical Research, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, Virginia, 1987),1-2.

<sup>58</sup> Lewis Hallam didn't even attempt to obtain permission to perform in Boston, with its strong Puritanical/anti-theatre population, not to mention the recent passage of a Massachusetts Act in 1699 prohibiting "all rogues, vagabonds and idle persons going about in any town or county begging, or persons using any subtle craft, juggling or unlawful games or plays" on penalty of fines. An additional anti-theatrical act was passed in Massachusetts in 1750 just prior to the London Company's arrival in America. The London Company faced additional difficulties later when Rhode Island and New Hampshire both passed laws in 1762 similar to the anti-theatrical law passed by Massachusetts. See Ron Engle, *The American Stage*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 23.

<sup>59</sup> After a six-month run in New York, Hallam and his company moved to Philadelphia. In Philadelphia, the London Company occupied the same theatre space that the Murray-Kean company had used in 1749, the store owned by William Plumstead between Pine and Lombard Streets and known simply as Plumstead's Warehouse. They opened April 15, 1754 with Nicolas Rowe's *The Fair Penitent* (1703) followed by David Garrick's *Miss in Her Teens* (1747) as an afterpiece and remained performing for two months before removing to Jamaica where the company remained until 1758. *New York Gazette*, September 1753. See Arthur Hornblow, *A History of the Theatre in America, Volume 1* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1919), 88-113. Hallam left North America to tour with his company in Jamaica in 1754, a common occurrence for acting troops from England and North America. Hallam died in Jamaica in 1756 and two years later his widow married David Douglass, who took over the American Company as manager. See Richardson Wright, *Revels in Jamaica* (Dodd, Mead & Company: New York, 1937), 43.

<sup>60</sup> Hallam advertised his prices as "Box, 8 shillings. Pit, 6 shillings. Gallery, 3 shillings" in a 17 September 1753 advertisement appearing in the *New York Mercury* (America's 22<sup>nd</sup> oldest newspaper founded in 1751). Advertisements of moderate length in the *New York Mercury* came at a cost of five shillings, printed by Hugh Gaine "at the Printing-Office opposite the Old-Slip where all Persons may be supplied with this Paper, at Twelve Shillings per Annum." See Hugh Gaine, *The Journals of Hugh Gaine, Printer: Biography and Bibliography* (New York: Dodd, mead & Co, 1902), 88.

<sup>61</sup> As quoted in Joseph N. Ireland, *Records of the New York Stage from 1750 to 1860, Vol. I* (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1966), 21.

<sup>62</sup> George O. Seilhamer commented, "America in the Hallam period was a rough land of earth and stone and tree, and even the theatrical towns--Williamsburg, Annapolis, New York and Philadelphia--were mere villages in comparison to what is called 'a good show town' in the theatrical slang of this age." Seilhamer, *History of the American Theatre, Volume 1*, 81.

<sup>63</sup> Even though Williamsburg served as the capital of Virginia, its limited population did not support a the permanent residence of an acting troupe and Hallam's Company had retreated to New York by summer

1753 and Philadelphia by spring 1754, where they gave a truncated season of performances from 15 April 1754 through 24 June 1754.

<sup>64</sup> Douglass, born around 1720, became part of John Moody's amateur performers in when he moved there in 1751. Douglass had not started his life in Jamaica as an actor. He worked as a printer when he first arrived, a profession to which he would eventually return. See John Bernard, *The Early Days of the American Stage, Being Selected from the Papers of One of Its Managers* (1830). It is important to remember that acting did allow women to maintain employment while raising children. Indeed, actors often came from acting families, where they would have received their training early on and where they would have taken on small roles until they had learned their craft well. The idea of marrying, raising a family and earning wages may have been particularly appealing to women during this period, for it allowed them social freedoms not often given to women in the greater transatlantic Anglophone world. Mrs. Hallam continued to act onstage until she died in 1774. Her son, Lewis Hallam, Jr., (1740-1808) went on to become the principal actor after his father's death and would become the American Company's theatre manager, acting for over fifty years. Hallam married Miss Turke, an actress reputed to be quarrelsome and difficult who caused problems within the American Company. See Don B. Wilmeth, *The Cambridge Guide to American Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 311.

<sup>65</sup> See Wright, *Revels in Jamaica*, 27-28.

<sup>66</sup> Pollock, *The Philadelphia Theatre in the Eighteenth Century*, 13.

<sup>67</sup> The lead role of Lucy was played by Mrs. Harman. In England, the popular British actress Dorothy Jordan would play Lucy in *The Virgin Unmasked* in 1787, and had her image permanently engraved and available for public consumption in the role.  
[http://www.library.illinois.edu/contentdm/cdm4/item\\_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/actors&CISOPTR=2738&CISOBX=1&REC=3](http://www.library.illinois.edu/contentdm/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/actors&CISOPTR=2738&CISOBX=1&REC=3)

<sup>68</sup> Pollock, *The Philadelphia Theatre in the Eighteenth Century*, 77.

<sup>69</sup> Theatre historians Seilhamer and Durang believe the opening of the Southwark Theatre to be 21 November 1766 yet the 6 November 1766 *Pennsylvania Journal* announced performances at the Southwark Theatre for 12 and 14 November and a week later announced still more performances on 17 and 19 November. Yet a late spring arrival of the company is supported by a petition submitted to the city by Quakers on 27 June 1766, announcing that the citizens of Philadelphia, "with real concern, heard that a Company of Stage Players are lately arrived in this City." Likewise, a letter appearing in the *Pennsylvania Journal* on 1 August 1766 indignantly stated, "They forsooth are going to build a Playhouse at Philadelphia." Another even more vehement letter appeared in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* on 31 July denigrating those for whom theatre was a welcomed form of entertainment and who "give encouragement to a Sett of strolling Comedians...lawless vagrants...I suppose they are the same Sett of Gentry who attempted to exhibit in New York, and were drove thence with righteous Indignation by the Inhabitants." Pollock, *The Philadelphia Theatre in the Eighteenth Century*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1933), 18, 85.

<sup>70</sup> With 33,131 residents, the population of New York City was larger than Philadelphia's by 1790 when the first United States census was taken. Boston's population had fallen to third place with 18,320 residents followed closely behind by Charleston with 16,359 residents and Baltimore with 13,503 residents. By 1800, New York reached a population of 60,515, Philadelphia 41,220, Baltimore 26,514 and Boston 24,937. In comparison, Washington DC, the new location of the United States Capital had a population of 3210. See United States Census Bureau, <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027/tab02.txt> accessed 10 January 2015.

<sup>71</sup> [http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/overview\\_of\\_pennsylvania\\_history/4281/1681-1776\\_\\_the\\_quaker\\_province/478727](http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/overview_of_pennsylvania_history/4281/1681-1776__the_quaker_province/478727)

<sup>72</sup> Anon., *True pleasure, cheerfulness, and happiness, the immediate consequence of religion fully and concisely proved. With some remarks on the theatre. Addressed to a young lady in Pennsylvania.* (Philadelphia: Printed by William and Thomas Bradford, at the London Coffee-House, 1767), 3.

<sup>73</sup> The author continued, “Our places of education almost universally perform them---: and three times a year, the grand school of *Westminster*, which has afforded the most politic statesmen, the firmest patriots and the worthiest ecclesiastics, for these many centuries--; encourages her sons to appear before an audience...Must Shakespear [sic], the immortal Shakespear [sic] be destroyed, shall Moliere be burnt-; shall Plautus, Terence, Euripeded, shall many famous antients [sic] and deserving moderns be involved in the horrid conflagration; and posterity and our contemporaries restrained from endeavoring to shine in this amusing—this edifying manner? Edifying! Ay edifying--: for vice and folly have never received severer lashes than those that have been liberally inflicted on them by dramatic writers.” Seeking moral value in theatre, the author of this pamphlet argued, “If then their writings delight, instruct, amuse and improve; as they undeniably do; --they may undoubtedly be exhibited upon the Stage. *Veluti in Speculum* [as in a mirror] is the motto of the Theatre...every fool, coxcomb, and villain, may see himself represented upon the stage as clearly as in a mirroure [sic], the scorn, the contempt and horror, of an impartial audience: while virtue and innocence, either triumph in the applause of the honest—candid—and humane, or sink into the grave with the dignity becoming boldness and resignation of a heart at peace with God and Man; submitting to his Providence with heroic fortitude, and inculcating it upon our minds, that to die or live is the selfsame thing, as in both situations we are alike under the protection of our God, our Creator, and our King. Great then are the benefits the Theatre is capacitated to afford us; and it is accordingly entitled to our applause—to our support;--the effect—the genuine consequences of its merit.” Anon., *True pleasure, cheerfulness, and happiness, the immediate consequence of religion fully and concisely proved. With some remarks on the theatre. Addressed to a young lady in Pennsylvania*. (Philadelphia: Printed by William and Thomas Bradford, at the London Coffee-House, 1767), 14-15.

<sup>74</sup> Anon., *True pleasure, cheerfulness, and happiness, the immediate consequence of religion fully and concisely proved. With some remarks on the theatre. Addressed to a young lady in Pennsylvania*. (Philadelphia: Printed by William and Thomas Bradford, at the London Coffee-House, 1767), 16. See also *See Advice and caution from the Monthly Meeting of Friends, in Philadelphia, the twenty-third day of the ninth month, 1768. To our friends and brethren, in religious profession with us*. Monthly Meeting of Friends of Philadelphia, (Printed by D. Hall and W. Sellers, 1768). As accessed in Early American Imprints, Series I: Evans, 1639-1800, no. 41824.

<sup>75</sup> Pollock, *The Philadelphia Theatre in the Eighteenth Century*, 85.

<sup>76</sup> By 14 November 1766 a playbill advertised the opening of the Southwark Theatre in Philadelphia, though the American Company may have been performed in this theatre earlier.

<sup>77</sup> Godfrey had offered his play to Douglass’s Company in 1759, but it was overlooked and would not be produced for another eight years. Unfortunately, the production of *The Prince of Parthia* took place four years after his death. Godfrey never knew whether his play was to be a success or a failure.

<sup>78</sup> The *Pennsylvania Gazette* was one of colonial America’s most prominent and successful newspapers from 1728, when it was first published, until 1800. Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790) was co-owner of the paper along with Hugh Meredith As referenced in Pollock, *The Philadelphia Theatre in the Eighteenth Century*, 96. Indeed, Barton’s work harshly satirized King George III and his government and criticized several prominent Philadelphia citizens.

<sup>79</sup> Cheer, who had joined the company in Jamaica, became the leading lady in Douglass’s when she replaced Mrs. Douglass. Cheer first appeared onstage in Philadelphia on November 21, 1766 as Catherine in David Garrick’s *Catherine and Petruchio* (1756) a revision of Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew*. See Pollock, *The Philadelphia Theatre in the Eighteenth Century*, 85. “Days of Playing” were consistently Monday, Wednesday and Friday in Philadelphia and newspapers, published on Thursdays, announced the play would appear the following Friday. In January 1767, the *Pennsylvania Gazette* recorded that “Miss Wainwright is a very good singer, and her action exceeds the famous Miss [Charlotte] Brent [of London’s Covent Garden Theatre. See Highfill, et. al., *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers & Other Stage Personnel in London, 1660-1800*, 196. New York theatre manager and historian William Dunlap, who had himself written seven plays between 1798 and 1828 performed on American stages, described several of the actresses in the American Company whom he had known or seen

perform as follows: “Mrs. Morris, the fine lady of the company, was a tall and elegant woman. Her acting very spirited. Mrs. Henry was a very small, fair woman, with much talent for speaking and singing, and though her figure gave her no aid, her spirit and judgment made her tragedy effective. Mrs. Harper was a woman of no personal beauty, but played the old woman of comedy respectably. Miss Tuke was young and comely, and awkward. She afterwards, as Mrs. Hallam [married to Lewis Hallam, Jr.], became an actress of merit, and improved in beauty and elegance.” Dunlap, *A History of the American Theatre from Its Origins to 1832*, 86.

<sup>80</sup> Dunlap, *A History of the American Theatre from Its Origins to 1832*, 26.

<sup>81</sup> As reward for their hard work, these actresses received their own benefit nights. Margaret Cheer’s benefit was on 7 May 1767 with George Colman’s *The Jealous Wife* (1761). Mrs. Morris received her benefit on 14 May 1767 with Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* (1591/1595). That same week, Mrs. Harman’s benefit occurred on 18 May 1767 with Richard Steele’s [1672-1729] comedy, *The Drummer, or The Haunted House*. Sarah Wainwright had her benefit performance on 4 June 1767 with Ben Johnson’s comedy *The Country Lasses; or, the Custom of the Manor* (1715) and singing in the pastoral opera, *The Chaplet* (1749). Mrs. Douglas followed with her benefit two weeks later on 18 June 1767 with William Whitehead’s tragedy, *The Roman Father* (1750). Sarah Hallam received her benefit performance on 29 June 1767 with Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline*, (1611) and with David Garrick’s comedy *Neck or Nothing*, (1766). And finally, Mrs. Wall had her benefit on 6 July 1767 using George Farquhar’s comedy *The Constant Couple* (1700) and *The Apprentice*. Mrs. Wall’s benefit was the last night of the season.

<sup>82</sup> *Pennsylvania Gazette*, December 17, 1767.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> Susan Abram, “Real Men: Masculinity, Spirituality, and Community in Late Eighteenth-Century Cherokee Warfare,” in *New Men: Manliness in Early America*, ed. Thomas A. Foster (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 79.

<sup>85</sup> “Traditional Cherokees also believe that after a person dies, his soul often continues to live on as a ghost. Ghosts are believed to have the ability to materialize where some, but not all people can see them.” See <http://www.cherokee.org/AboutTheNation/Culture/General/TheTraditionalBeliefSystem.aspx>.

<sup>86</sup> Abram, “Real Men,” 72.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>88</sup> Ruth Cosby Dimmick, *Our Theatres To-day and Yesterday, Beginning of the Drama on Manhattan Island and the Troublous Days of Early Managers and Players, with Anecdotal Account of the Growth of the Amusement Industry. Stories and Personal Sketches of Men and Women Connected with Famous Houses in a Bygone Era, as Well as the Present. From 1732 to 1913* (New York: H.K. Fly, 1913), 15-16.

<sup>89</sup> Abram, “Real Men,” 83.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>92</sup> James Adair, *The History of the American Indians*, ed. Kathryn E. Holland Braund (1775; reprint, Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2005), 265; Abram, “Real Men,” 84.

<sup>93</sup> Abram, “Real Men,” 84.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> Maria Storer (originally from Ireland and recently recruited from Jamaica) made her first American appearance as Myrtila on the Philadelphia stage on 4 October in Colley Cibber's reworking of John Vanbrugh's unfinished comedy *The Provoked Husband* (1728). The afterpiece for that evening was David Garrick's *Miss in Her Teens* (1747) in which Maria Storer also played a breeches role as Mr. Fribble. Her older sister Ann acted the part of Tag in this production and Helen? Hallam played Miss Biddy. Appearing alongside Maria Storer were Sarah Hallam as Miss Jenny, Mrs. Tomlinson as Mrs. Motherly, Mrs. Harman as Lady Wronghead and Margaret Cheer as Lady Townly. See Pollock, *The Philadelphia Theatre in the Eighteenth Century*, 104.

<sup>100</sup> *Advice and caution from the Monthly Meeting of Friends, in Philadelphia, the twenty-third day of the ninth month, 1768. To our friends and brethren, in religious profession with us.* Monthly Meeting of Friends of Philadelphia, (Printed by D. Hall and W. Sellers, 1768). As accessed in Early American Imprints, Series I: Evans, 1639-1800, no. 41824.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> The announcement for the performance on 28 August was not as early as the dates might indicate. In September 1752, Great Britain (and thus the American colonies) switched to the Gregorian calendar and the eleven days between 2 September 1752 and 15 September 1752 were omitted from the calendar. Thus September 15 on the new calendar was really only one week (one the new calendar) later.

<sup>103</sup> 28 August 1752, *Virginia Gazette*, 3.

<sup>104</sup> For more on class structure and cultural exchange, see Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* and Robert Blair St. George, *Conversing by Signs: Poetics of Implication in Colonial New England Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

<sup>105</sup> Richard Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993).

<sup>106</sup> For an intriguing examination of how spaces developed and their importance in these early theatres, see Gay McAuley, *Space in Performance: Making Meaning in the Theatre* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999).

<sup>107</sup> The effect of consumerism on early American markets can be seen in Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* and Cary Carson, "The Consumer Revolution in Colonial British America: Why Demand?" in Cary Carson, Ronald Hoffman, and Peter J. Albert, eds., *Of Consuming Interests: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1988), 483-697.

<sup>108</sup> Theatre Historian T. Allston Brown wrote that a company of actors "secured a large room in the upper part of a building near the junction of Pearl Street and Maiden Lane, which was fitted up with a platform stage and raised seats, capable of seating about four hundred persons. They continued their performances for one month, acting three times a week. Early in December of the same year they resumed, having made several additions to their party. This company continued (playing in New York) until February 1734; it was then disbanded. T. Allston Brown, *A History of the New York Stage* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1903). Earliest evidence of the existence of the Nassau Street Theatre is from a newspaper advertisement: "On the 6<sup>th</sup> instant, the New Theatre, in the building of the Hon. Rip Van Dam Esq, was opened with the comedy of *The Recruiting Officer*, the part of Worthy acted by the ingenious Mr. Thomas Heady, barber and Peruque [wig] maker to his Honour." (*New England and Boston Gazette*, 11 December 1732). Also suggesting the permanence of a theatre in New York is the following advertisement: "To be sold at reasonable rates. All sorts of Household Goods vix., Beds, Chairs, Tables, Chest of Drawers, Looking Glasses, Andirons and Pictures, as also several sorts of Druggs and Medecines [sic], also a Negro Girl about 16 years of age has had small pox is fit for Town or Country. Enquire of George Talbot. Next door to the Playhouse." (*New York Gazette*, 15 October 1733).

<sup>109</sup> Candles were the most common form of lighting, followed later by oil lamps (that smoked badly). Brown, *A History of the New York Stage*, 2.

<sup>110</sup> On 24 January 1736, the *South Carolina Gazette* announced: “On Thursday, the 12<sup>th</sup> of February, will be opened the new theatre in Dock Street, in which will be performed the comedy called *The Recruiting Officer*. Tickets for the pitt [sic] and boxes will be delivered at Mr. Charles Shepherd’s on Thursday, the 5<sup>th</sup> of February. Boxes 30s. Pitt 20s, gallery 15s.” 24 January 1736 *South Carolina Gazette*. In comparison, prices for tickets in New York were \$1.25 for seats in the orchestra, 75 cents for seats in the gallery and \$2 for box seats. The high cost of seats in the Dock Street Theatre suggests that seating may have been limited and attendance in high demand. Located on the south side of Queen Street and west of Church Street, it was likely destroyed by the fire that destroyed the French Quarter in 1740.

<sup>111</sup> John Smith, son-in-law of James Logan wrote in his journal 22 August 1749, “Joseph Morris and I happened in at Peacock Bigger’s and drank tea there and his daughter being one of the company who were going to hear the tragedy of *Cato* acted, it occasioned some conversation in which I expressed my sorrow that anything of the kind was encouraged.” Excerpt from Arthur Hornblow, *A History of Theatre in America from Its Beginnings to the Present Time* (New York: J. P. Lippincott, 1919), 53.

<sup>112</sup> Also in this same edition of the paper “By his Excellency’s Permission at the Theatre in Nassau Street. On Monday the 5<sup>th</sup> day of March next will be presented The Historical Tragedy of “King Richard III.” Wrote originally by Shakespeare and altered by Colly Cibber, Esq. In this play is contained The Death of King Henry 6<sup>th</sup>, the artful acquisition of the Crown by King Richard, the Murder of the Princes in the Tower. The Landing of the Earl of Richmond and the Battle of Bosworth Field. Tickets will be ready and delivered by Thursday next, and to be had of the Printer thereof. Pitt 5 l. Gallery 3l. To begin precisely at half an hour after 6 o’clock and no Person to be admitted behind the Scenes.” 26 February 1750, *New York Post-boy*.

<sup>113</sup> Theatre scene painters included Piere-Luc-Charles Ciceri (1782-1868), John Inigo Richards (1731-1810) and Nicholas Thomas Dall (d. 1777) among others. See Susan Crabtree and Peter Beudert, *Scenic Art for the Theatre: History, Tools, and Techniques* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2005), 407.

<sup>114</sup> 6 March 1760 *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis).

<sup>115</sup> 4 October 1770 *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis).  
<http://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc4800/sc4872/001281/html/m1281-1132.html>

<sup>116</sup> Ibid

<sup>117</sup> Ibid

<sup>118</sup> 6 September 1770 *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis).  
<http://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc4800/sc4872/001281/html/m1281-1110.html>

<sup>119</sup> Ibid

<sup>120</sup> Ibid

<sup>121</sup> Ibid

<sup>122</sup> 4 October 1770 *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis).  
<http://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc4800/sc4872/001281/html/m1281-1132.html>

<sup>123</sup> Allardyce Nicoll, *The Garrick Stage: Theatres and Audience in the Eighteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1981), 22.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid, 23-24.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid, 25.

<sup>126</sup> In 1791, the Drury Lane Theatre, first opened in 1663, was demolished and the acting company moved temporarily to the new King’s Theatre, known as the Theatre Royal Haymarket. The new Drury Lane stage itself was 83 feet wide and 92 feet deep—and the theatre was able to accommodate more than 3600 spectators, more than five times its original audience limit of 700 spectators. Theatre designer Henry Holland claimed the theatre was “on a larger scale than any other theatre in Europe” and except for

churches, it was London's tallest building. Technological advances made building such a cavernous space possible. Iron columns replaced bulky wood, which supported five tiers of galleries. As one of the architects of the Theatre Royal Drury Lane stated, "I was aware of the very popular notion that our theatres ought to be very small; but it appeared to me that if that very notion should be suffered to proceed too far it would in every way deteriorate our dramatic performances depriving the proprietors of that very revenue which is indispensable to defray the heavy expenses of such a concern." Benjamin Dean Wyatt, architect of the Drury Lane Theatre in 1811 after it was destroyed by fire in 1809, as quoted in Iain Mackintosh, *Architecture, Actor and Audience*, (London: Routledge, 2003) 31.

<sup>127</sup> Boaden, James. *Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons : Interspersed with anecdotes of authors and actors* (London: H. Colburn, 1827).

<sup>128</sup> Following a fire in 1809, the Drury Lane Theatre reopened on October 10, 1812 with some concessions toward intimacy and additional technological improvements. The theatre was slightly smaller, seating a mere 3060—though a theatre of this size was still considered quite large, and productions there continued to rely on scenery and special effects rather than on dialogue and acting to dazzle audiences. Of course audience taste had something to do with the desire for the spectacle—who wouldn't want to see a daring horseback escape up a flowing cataract with fire raging all around, as seen in an 1823 production of William T. Moncrieff's 1823 melodrama, *Cataract of the Ganges*. Likewise, special effects for a 1829 production at the Drury Lane Theatre included a hydraulic apparatus that could discharge a veritable flood—39 tons or almost 9500 gallons of water.

<sup>129</sup> Further technological advancements improved audience experiences as well. Not only could audiences imagine themselves at the edge of danger, they could now see what was happening onstage much more clearly. By 1817, Theatre Royal Drury Lane replaced former candles and smoky oil lamps that covered the Drury Lane Stage with bare flame gaslight. By 1837, the other licensed theatre, Theatre Royal Covent Garden, replaced bare flame gaslight with the intense illumination of limelight, which used a block of quicklime heated by an oxyhydrogen flame. Limelights were used as spotlights to highlight solo performers—certainly important in the larger theatre spaces where actors might become lost onstage—and remained popular in theatre lighting until replaced in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century by electric arc lighting.

<sup>130</sup> See United States Census Bureau, <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027/tab02.txt> accessed 10 January 2015.

<sup>131</sup> For a larger discussion on the changing social demographics of colonial America see James T. Lemon, "Colonial America in the Eighteenth Century," in *North America: The Historical Geography of a Changing Continent*, ed. Robert Mitchell and Paul Groves, et. al., (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2012.)

<sup>132</sup> The growing variety of and desire for new consumer goods is evident in a variety of advertisements taken out in the 1752 *Virginia Gazette*. Williamsburg merchant, James Carter announced in the *Virginia Gazette* that he had available for sale English Saffron, Russia Castor, Spanish Flies, Rhubarb and Ipecacuanna (used for medicinal purposes) Spermaceti, Spanish Liquorice, British Rock Oil, fine French lavender, London-made lancets, Cinnamon, Cloves, Mace and Nutmegs. James Graham announced on the same page the availability of "European Goods" valued at around "400 L. Sterling." Likewise, Joseph Scrivener advertised his inventory of "Fine red Herrings, Lemons, Raisins, Currants, Citron, Sweet-meats, Coffee, Anchovies, Capers, Olives, Almonds, Oil, best Vinegar, white Wine ditto, Flower of Mustard, Castile Soap, Smoaking [sic] Tobacco, Arrack, French Brandy, red Port, Sherry, Marble Slabs, Mortars, &c. &c." *The Virginia Gazette*, June 5 1752, 2, 4.

<sup>133</sup> Jean-Christophe Agnew, *Worlds Apart: The Market and the Theater in Anglo-American Thought, 1550-1750*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988). See also Lisa A. Freeman, *Character's Theater: Genre and Identity on the Eighteenth-Century English Stage* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

<sup>134</sup> Most London actors were accustomed to traveling "the circuit" during the summer season, touring theatres that included Bath, Dublin, York and Liverpool. Crossing the Atlantic, while more ambitious, was

not unheard of as an extension of travel within the British Isles. Crossing the Atlantic could take thirty to forty days or more, depending on favorable weather and a solidly constructed vessel. Passengers who could not pay outright for their journey could sell their services in indenture for a specific period of time, usually five to seven years for an adult. Persons employed in theatre were some of the most active transatlantic and colonial American travelers during the late eighteenth century, making frequent trips from city to city in British North America (less so into Canada), and back to London to recruit new actors, and to the British Caribbean when necessary. Travel from England to America usually required ships to sail down the west coast of Africa toward the Cape Verde Islands so that ships could take advantage of westwardly-flowing ocean currents and catch the trade winds that blew from Africa to the Caribbean making for an easier, if not shorter journey across the Atlantic. Ships could (and did) sail due west from England to Virginia, and this straighter path required fewer provisions and could be accomplished in less time, but winds were not as forgiving or as consistent as with the longer route and thus the straighter and potentially shorter path could become more dangerous.

<sup>135</sup> Frank Trentmann, "Crossing Divides: Consumption and globalization in history," *Journal of Consumer Culture*, (2009) 9:187, 202.

<sup>136</sup> Following in the footsteps of historians interested in consumer culture such as T. H. Breen, Richard L. Bushman, and Lois Green Carr and Lorena S. Walsh, Ann Smart Martin in her work, *Buying into the World of Goods: Early Consumers in Backcountry Virginia* (2008) argues that a variety of early Americans, regardless of class, race or gender, participated in the consumption of consumer goods increasingly imported from all over the world. Certainly Williamsburg, at the center of importance in Virginia as its capital, would have seen the transference of goods and services that moved, as actors did, where consumers were willing to pay. T. H. Breen has written extensively on consumer culture in colonial America, and has shown a special interest in the Virginia region. His work, *Tobacco Culture: the Mentality of the Great Tidewater Planters on the Eve of Revolution* (2001), and *Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (2004) provide important arguments that will be explored later in this chapter. Lois Green Carr and Lorena S. Walsh as historians are particularly interested in the Chesapeake region and have written several essays on consumer culture including "Changing Lifestyles and Consumer Behavior in the Colonial Chesapeake," which appeared in a collection of articles on consumer culture, *Of Consuming Interests: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century* (ed. Cary Carson, et. Al). Various arguments about the burgeoning consumer society in the transatlantic Anglophone world will be presented in more detail later in this work. For the above quotation, see Ann Smart Martin, *Buying into the World of Goods: Early Consumers in Backwater Virginia* Studies in Early American Economy and Society from the Library Company of Philadelphia (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).

<sup>137</sup> Justin Roberts, *Slavery and the Enlightenment in the British Atlantic, 1750-1807* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 14.

<sup>138</sup> For example, in London, during the height of her acting career in the 1770s, fashion icon for elite London society Francis Barton Abington (1731/7-1815) was painted at least six times by Sir Joshua Reynolds, and had signed a three-season contract to David Garrick at the Drury Lane Theatre in 1774 where she earned twelve pounds a week with sixty pounds allowance for clothing. *The Life of Mrs. Abington (Formerly Miss Barton) Celebrated Comic Actress...*, ed. Of the "Life of [James] Quin" (London: Reader, Orange Street, Holborn, 1888), 57.

<sup>139</sup> John Alden, "A Season in Federal Street J. B. Williamson and the Boston Theatre 1796-1797, *American Antiquarian Society Proceedings*, Appendix: Weekly Expenses of the Boston Theatre, 32-34. <http://www.americanantiquarian.org/proceedings/44539525.pdf> accessed 9 September 2013.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid*, 32-34.

<http://www.americanantiquarian.org/proceedings/44539525.pdf> accessed 9 September 2013.

<sup>141</sup> Williamsburg, even as the capital of Virginia, could in no way compare with London in 1752. The entire population of Virginia at the beginning of the eighteenth century had been about sixty thousand residents, a

significant number of whom were enslaved. “The Number of People in the whole Town [of London]” the *Maryland Gazette* reported on 21 December 1752, “are computed at about one Million. In the City of London, properly so called, there are 12000 Houses. In the Parishes without the Walls, but within the Liberties, 36,320. In the Parishes which lie in Middlesex and Surrey and are a Part of the Town, 46,300 Houses. And in the City and Liberties of Westminster, 28330 Houses. And as to the Number of Souls in each of these grand Divisions, if we multiply the Number of Houses in the City of London by eight and a half, we shall find there 102,000. By the same Rule, there will be found 308,720 in the sixteen Parishes without the Walls; 393,550 in the twenty Out Parishes of Middlesex and Surrey; and 240,805 in the City and Liberties of Westminster. All which, added together, make 1 045 075 People, in the whole Town.” The *Maryland Gazette* began this article by stating, “To gratify the Curiosity of such of our Readers, who have not had an Opportunity of seeing the famous City of London, the Metropolis of his Majesty’s Dominions; the following short Description of it is here inferred, from Salmon’s *Gazetteer*, published in 1747.” *The Maryland Gazette*, Thursday 21 December 1752, No. 398, 1.

<http://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc4800/sc4872/001279/pdf/m1279-0220.pdf> Accessed 20 February 2014.

<sup>142</sup> As Virginia’s acting governor, Robert Dinwiddie was known to entertain well; “there was much gaiety in Williamsburg during Dinwiddie’s time, and the plays attracted many people from a distance.” See John Richard Alden, *Robert Dinwiddie: Servant of the Crown* (Williamsburg, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1973), 62. For quotation on Dinwiddie as an entertainer, see Lyon Gardner Tyler, *Williamsburg: The Old Colonial Capital* (Williamsburg, VA: Whitlet & Shepperson, 1907), 32. Dinwiddie, having recently resided in London, may have been interested in reestablishing theatre in Williamsburg as a source of cultural public entertainment. Players who wished to perform in Williamsburg were required to receive a certificate signed by the Governor’s council that recommended them as actors and as respectable persons. See *Providence Magazine* Vol. xxviii, no. 1, January 1916, Published by the Providence Chamber of Commerce, 642.

<sup>143</sup> See Vicki Rozema, *Cherokee Voices: Early Accounts of Cherokee Life in the East* (Winston-Salem, N.C.: John F. Blair, 2002), 14-18.

<sup>144</sup> See David H. Corkran, *The Cherokee Frontier: Conflicts and Survival, 1740-62* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962); Tom Harley, *The Dividing Paths: Cherokees and South Carolinians through the Era of Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Gregory Evans Dowd, “The Panic of 1751: The Significance of Rumors on the South Carolina-Cherokee Frontier,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, 53, No. 3 (July 1996), 527-560. See also John Oliphant, *Peace and War on the Anglo-Cherokee Frontier 1756-63* (Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK: Palgrave, 2001).

<sup>145</sup> Robert Dinwiddie to the Board of Trade, 10 December 1752 Colonial Office 5/1327, pt 2, folio 242v., Virginia Colonial records Project, microfilm, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library, Williamsburg, Virginia.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>147</sup> *Virginia Gazette* 17 November 1752, 2.

<sup>148</sup> This notice was followed by another sentence announcing damage caused by a “violent Hurricane” in “Charles-Town” South Carolina. *Virginia Gazette*, 10 November 1752, 2. Accessed 20 February 2014.

<http://research.history.org/DigitalLibrary/VirginiaGazette/VGImagePopup.cfm?ID=1281&Res=HI>

<sup>149</sup> *Virginia Gazette* 17 November 1752, 2. George O. Seilhamer remarked in his nineteenth-century history of American theatre that “the simplicity exhibited by ‘the Empress’ at the play was more than equaled by the grotesque servility of the high-flown language in which the visit of savage royalty to the theatre is described.” See Seilhamer, *History of the American Theatre*, 42.

<sup>150</sup> Grier, “Staging the Cherokee *Othello*” 75.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>153</sup> Grier notes that Theatre historian Joseph Roach calls this particular performance “Mohawk *Macbeth*” and comments that the practice continued to colonial North America, where leaders engaged with Indian treatises would invite their guests to an evening’s entertainment and then write up reports about their reactions, often with racialized tendencies to minimize the Indian experience. See Grier, “Staging the Cherokee *Othello*,” 75-76.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>159</sup> The large, almost ¼ page advertisement used large fonts to attract a reader’s attention. The performance advertised for the evening of 15 September was Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice* (a stow the Indians ock piece for the eighteenth century), a “new occasional Prologue” and a farce, *The Anatomist; or, The Sham Doctor*. The cost to attend this six o’clock performance was 7 shilling 6 pence for a box seat, 5 shillings 9 pence for pit and balcony seats, and 3 shillings 9 pence for a place in the gallery. No person was to be admitted behind the scene, a practice often done in London at the time for privileged patrons. The advertisement ended with a loyal Latin cry of *Vivat Rex*. See *The Virginia Gazette*, 28 August 1752, 3.

<sup>160</sup> *Maryland Gazette*, November 17, 1752. Hallam’s November performance was also advertised in *The Virginia Gazette* in November with the same costs for attendance listed.

<sup>161</sup> These members of government further commented in the *Gazette*, “His Majesty, always good and gracious to his People, could not more agreeably have repaired the Loss we sustained in our late Governor Sir *William Gooch*, than by appointing you who are so well acquainted with us, our Laws and Constitutions, to be his worthy Successor; and we hope that your Administration may be longer, and if possible more happy, than his.” *The Virginia Gazette*, 28 November 1751, 3.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>163</sup> For other discussions of English relations prior to the American Revolution with the Cherokee see Paul Vickers, *Chief of Nations: The Cherokee Nation 1730 to 1839* (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, 2005). Also, John Stuart Olifant, examines Anglo-Indian relations during the Seven Years War, and looks closely at the relations of the Anglos with Atakullakulla (1708-1778), the Cherokee statesman and eventually leader of the Cherokee people, who traveled with the Cherokee delegation to England in 1730 in *Peace and War on the Anglo-Cherokee Frontier, 1756-63* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001). Bernard Sheehan’s *Savagism and Civility: Indians and Englishmen in Colonial Virginia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980) argues that the root of violence between the English and the native populations was created by pre-imagined myth of the savage nature of these people. Further, Sheehan argues that their “ignoble” (and thus “innocent”) character was seen to lack culture and civility or any ordered social structure inherent in European society. This myth, he argues, culminated in the 1622 massacre that resulted from the exploitation of this myth, a myth that continued through the eighteenth century. John Richard Alden’s biography of Robert Dinwiddie, *Robert Dinwiddie: Servant of the Crown* (Williamsburg: University Press of Virginia, 1973) makes mention of the Cherokee delegation coming to Williamsburg in 1752 as an important diplomatic event. For Dinwiddie’s own accounts and comments see Robert Dinwiddie, *Official Records of Robert Dinwiddie: Lieutenant-Governor of the Colony of Virginia 1751-1758* in the Collections of Virginia Historical Society, Vol. I (Richmond, VA: Published by the Society, 1884), viii-ix.

<sup>164</sup> Dinwiddie’s interest in seeking friendly terms with Native nations was partly self-serving. As a good British citizen who had benefitted himself from appointed positions in the transatlantic British Empire, Dinwiddie supported westward expansion and had himself invested in the Ohio Company. As early as June 1752, in the Treaty of Logstown, Dinwiddie had sought for permission from the leaders of the Six Nations for the Ohio Company to build a fort. Thus for his own personal financial interests it would serve him well

to ensure that trade relations with these tribes were maintained, both to increase trade opportunities and to help remove the French from the Ohio Company's lands. Dinwiddie's involvement as an investor in the Ohio Company would lead him eventually to send a young George Washington to western Pennsylvania to convince (unsuccessfully) the French to leave those lands, in essence starting Washington's long career as a military leader. Unfortunately, the French pushed Washington back, leaving Virginia's western borders vulnerable in 1754. While Dinwiddie built a fort for protection, he also entered into negotiations again with various tribes, including the Catawba and Cherokee. See John Richard Alden, *Robert Dinwiddie: Servant of the Crown* (Williamsburg, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1973), 42. See also See Robert Dinwiddie, *Official Records*, vii-x.

<sup>165</sup> Richard White in *Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 234.

<sup>166</sup> Twightwees, also known as the Miami People and one of the Great Lakes tribes, originally spoke one of the Algonquin languages. The closest Twightwee residents to Virginia would have been in the Ohio River Valley. The fact that the government of Virginia under William Trent gave presents to Twightwees suggests the desire for the English government to form stronger alliances with Native peoples from various tribes to side with them against the French, even Virginians with Nation populations in the Great Lakes region. *The Virginia Gazette* further describes the violence of the interaction, worth quoting extensively to understand the contemporary attitudes of the English colonists against the French and Indians;

“On the 21<sup>st</sup> of June about Nine O’Clock in the Morning 240 of the *French* and *French Indians*, surpriz’d the Twightwees in their Corn Fields, and came so suddenly on them, that the white Men, who were in their Houses, had the utmost Difficulty to reach the Fort. Three not being about to get in, shut themselves up in one of the Houses adjoining. There were about 20 Men and Boys, including the white Men in the Fort. The *Indians* having taken Possession of the white Mens [sic] Houses advanced towards the Fort, firing very briskly, which was a warmly returned, then attacked the Log House where the three Men were shut up, who having Plenty of Arms and Ammunition, and being well secured by the Strength of the House might have defended themselves against the whole Body of the Enemy...The *French* and *Indians* in the Afternoon informed the *Twightwees*, that if they would deliver up the white Men that were in the Fort, they would break up the siege, and go home. After a Consultation, it was agreed by the *Indians* and Whites, that as there were so few Men, and no Water, in the Fort, it was better to deliver up the white Men, with beaver and Wampum, to the *Indians*, on Condition, they would do them no further Injury, than let the Fort be taken, and all be at their Mercy...One of the white Men delivered up to them, being wounded in the Belly, they stabbed and scalped him, took out his Heart and eat it; and as they’ve a considerable Reward for killing an *Englishman*, they cut off his Fingers, and carried them with them to *Canada* so prove him such.” Newspaper article as it appeared in *The Virginia Gazette*, 27 October 1752, 1. As accessed from the Colonial Williamsburg site:

<http://research.history.org/DigitalLibrary/VirginiaGazette/VGImagePopup.cfm?ID=1272&Res=HI> The graphic nature of these attacks was not lost on readers, nor was the tentative relationship colonists had with various Native groups. The article continued, “The *Six Nations* have not yet declared War...but have called in all their Warriors, and are making such Preparation, that we have Reason to expect a Declaration very soon.” Newspaper article as it appeared in *The Virginia Gazette*, 27 October 1752,1. As accessed from the Colonial Williamsburg site:

<http://research.history.org/DigitalLibrary/VirginiaGazette/VGImagePopup.cfm?ID=1272&Res=HI>

<sup>167</sup> In the tradition of European leadership, Cumming insisted that the Cherokee leader, Moytoy of Tellico (c. 1687-1741), be crowned “Emperor,” establishing the tradition of using this European title for subsequent Cherokee leaders in America during the eighteenth century. Moytoy of Tellico was the father of the Cherokee “Emperor” Amouskositte who visited Robert Dinwiddie in Williamsburg in 1752 and who was entertained by Lewis Hallam's London Company of Comedians. See Paul Vickers, *Chief of Nations: The Cherokee Nation 1730-1839*, (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, 2005), 15-20.

<sup>168</sup> *Daily Journal News*, 7 September 1730, as quoted in Paul Vickers, *Chief of Nations: The Cherokee Nation 1730-1839*, (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, 2005), 18.

<sup>169</sup> Virginia was one of England's largest colonies by 1750. In the role of Lieutenant-Governor and in the absence of the crown-appointed governor, Dinwiddie in essence was responsible for running the colony of Virginia. Dinwiddie technically served first under Governor Willem Anne van Keppel, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Abermarle (1702-1754) from July 1751 to July 1756, then under Governor John Campbell, 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Loudoun (1705-1782) from July 1756 to January 1758. Neither governor was ever present in America. Dinwiddie brought his wife, Rebecca, and their two daughters, Elizabeth (b. 1738) and Rebecca (b. 1742) to Virginia. They arrived in Yorktown, Virginia, on November 20, 1751, only seven months before Lewis Hallam and the London Company. He had worked as an accountant and merchant before he was appointed a custom's collector in Bermuda for almost a dozen years from December 1, 1727 to April 11, 1738. In 1738 he was appointed surveyor-general (in charge of enforcing trade laws and collecting taxes) for the "southern ports of the Continent of America." See Robert Dinwiddie, *Official Records of Robert Dinwiddie*, viii-ix. Between 1738 and 1743 Dinwiddie made his residence in Virginia. In 1743, Dinwiddie was specially commissioned as "Inspector General" of the Island of Bermuda, where he returned and exposed tax revenue inconsistencies. In 1749 Dinwiddie moved to London, where he resided "as a merchant engaged in trade with the colonies." In 1751, Dinwiddie was appointed Lieutenant-Governor of Virginia, although he was not recorded as being "Govr on Shoar" by prominent Williamsburg, Virginia resident and member of the governor's council from 1745-1770, John Blair (1687-1771) until November 20, 1751. See Robert Dinwiddie, *The Official Records of Robert Dinwiddie*, and also John Richard Allen, *Robert Dinwiddie: Servant of the Crown* (Williamsburg, VA: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, University Press of Virginia, 1973), 1, 6. Dinwiddie attempted to form alliances with Indians living in Virginia and in the Ohio Country (he had invested heavily in the Ohio Company). He appointed a young George Washington to head to Western Pennsylvania to convince the French to leave land currently claimed by the Ohio Company. When the French refused, Dinwiddie ordered Washington to push the French out, an act that ultimately resulted in a larger conflagration in the French and Indian War. Washington was pushed back by the French, which left Virginia's western border relatively defenseless. Dinwiddie also undertook negotiations with various tribes, including the Cherokee and Catawbas. He left his position as governor in 1758 and retired to England, where he died in 1770. For more on Dinwiddie's involvement in the French and Indian War see Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf: Random House, 2000) and R. Douglas Hurt, *The Ohio Frontier: Crucible of the Old Northwest, 1720-1830* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996). While Dinwiddie was abroad for much of the period from 1727-1758, he was in London from 1749-1751 and is likely to have attended theatre performances while there. A portrait of Dinwiddie made around 1760 is in London's National Portrait Gallery collection NPG 1640. Also see John Richard Allen, *Robert Dinwiddie: Servant of the Crown* (Williamsburg, VA: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, University Press of Virginia, 1973), 1-2.

<sup>170</sup> Individuals made a difference in Anglo-Indian relations during the Seven Years War. Establishing a solid trade relationship with the Cherokee would strengthen the commonwealth. The Cherokee relationship with the South Carolina Governors, particularly with William Lyttleton (1756-1760) caused the Cherokee to look elsewhere for an alliance. The previous governor, James Glen, had forged a treaty with the Cherokee, the Treaty of Saluda Old Town and also created antagonistic relations between Cherokee and Africans/African Americans to stop any alliance forming between the two groups. See John Oliphant, *Peace and War on the Anglo-Cherokee Frontier, 1756-63* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001). Subsequently, and likely in reflection of the behavior of their South Carolinian neighbors, Cherokee communities owned slaves and participated in slave trading. See Barbara Krauthamer, *Black Slaves, Indian Masters: Slavery, Emancipation, and Citizenship in the Native American South* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

<sup>171</sup> White, *Middle Ground*, xxxi.

<sup>172</sup> For a lengthy and informative examination of Robert Dinwiddie and his negotiations with Native populations, see Alden, *Robert Dinwiddie: Servant of the Crown*.

<sup>173</sup> Dinwiddie, *The Official Records*, 300-301.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid*, 298-299.

<sup>175</sup> The contested space of the theatre was also challenged on 8 December 1752 when, according to the *Maryland Gazette*, “last Friday Night about eleven o’ Clock, the Play-House in this City was broke open by one White Man and two Negroes, who violently assaulted and wounded Patrick Maloney, Servant to the Company, by knocking him down, and throwing him upon the Iron Spikes, one of which ran into his Leg, by which he hung for a considerable Time till he was relieved by some Negroes: The Villains that perpetrated this horrid act escaped, but a Reward is offered for apprehending them, and as the aforesaid Patrick Maloney continues dangerously ill of his Wounds, it is hoped they will be taken and brought to Justice.” *The Maryland Gazette* 1 Feb 1753 No. 404, 2; image number 241; <http://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc4800/sc4872/001279/html/m1279-0241.html>; accessed 20 February 2014. See also *The Virginia Gazette*, 8 December 1752, 2-3.

<sup>176</sup> *The Maryland Gazette*, Thursday, 17 July 1754, Numb. 480, 2; image number 354. <http://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc4800/sc4872/001279/html/m1279-0535.html>; accessed 20 February 2014.

<sup>177</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concept and Contours* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 83.

<sup>178</sup> “The Muse still labour’d to encrease [sic] her Fame  
Summon’d her Agents quickly to appear,  
*Haste, to Virginia’s Plains, my Sons, repair,*  
The Goddess said, *Go confident to find*  
*An Audience sensible, polite and kind.*  
We heard and strait obey’d; from *Britain’s Shore*  
These unknown Climes advent’ring to explore:  
For us then, and our Muse, this low I bend,  
Nor fear to find in each the warmest Friend;  
Each smiling Aspect dissipates our Fear,  
We ne’er can fail of kind Protection here;  
The Stage is ever Wisdom’s fav’rite Care:  
Accept our Labours then, approve out Pains,  
Your Smiles will please us equal to our Gains;  
And as you all esteem the Darling Muse,  
The gen’ros *Plaudit* you will not refuse.” *Virginia Gazette*, 22 September 1752, 3.

<sup>179</sup> Yet they were not the only “performers” advertised to be in the area. In the same June 1752 edition of the *Virginia Gazette* in which Hallam announced their imminent arrival to Williamsburg, an announcement warned the community of a man by the name of Joseph Trapp who was pretending to be a minister; “And, to prevent the like shameful Impositions for the future, His Honour the Governor hereby requires all Ministers, not to permit Strangers to officiate in their Churches or Chapels, without producing their Orders, and a license from the Lord Bishop of London.” *Virginia Gazette*, 12 June 1752, 3.

<sup>180</sup> At the end of the nineteenth century, “The Virginians of that period were too busy with schemes of territorial aggrandizement to devote much time to the drama, and the comedians of Hallam’s company found the columns of the *Virginia Gazette* devoted to negotiations with the Mingoos, Shawnees and Twightwees, and accounts of Indian massacres instead of criticisms of plays and players.” Indeed while Seilhamer’s language is dated in his heavy-handed description of colonial interests in “massacres” and in Indian relations, it is likely that colonial Virginians were more interested in communications with their neighbors rather than in editorials about the latest theatrical successes. In examining the *Virginia Gazette* advertisements and editorials between 1752 and 1776, for example, world, colonial and local politics trump space in the paper devoted to theatre, either in advertisements or in comments about plays and players. See Seilhamer, *History of the American Theatre Before the Revolution*, 81-82.

<sup>181</sup> Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1986), 93.

<sup>182</sup> Of course Hallam, noting the hesitancy with which his company had been granted permission by Governor Dunwiddle, made certain he announced that their performances would be presented “in as polite a Manner as at the Theatres in London” though what he meant by “polite” remains a dubious qualifier for certainly not all contemporary London performances would have been considered tasteful or genteel by the (generally) more conservative American audience.

<sup>183</sup> When Mrs. Hallam came to Williamsburg she had several roles to play, including that of wife, mother, actress and community member. First, she had to be a supportive wife. It would not have been an easy task to pick up and move across the Atlantic, investing their life’s savings and their personal integrity in this venture. Second, she would have had to be an encouraging mother to the three children who did accompany her, feeding them, finding places for them to stay, helping them learn lines, teaching them to mend and sew costumes, all the while preparing for her own performances. These first two tasks were private responsibilities she needed to take on to help her family thrive. Third, Mrs. Hallam would have had to earn the respect of the audience by providing them with her best performances so that they might wish to return. Fourth, she had to help win her new neighbors over and become accepted as part of the community, presenting herself as a morally sound character in spite of her traveling lifestyle which often bred contempt, and in spite of the variety of morally questionable roles she might play on the stage. As an actress and as an “ambassador” for theatre, Mrs. Hallam would have challenged the social norms and expectations then prevalent in America. A woman’s role in mid-eighteenth-century colonial America tended to be far more subdued and private than the life led by Mrs Hallam. Furthermore, as an actress and a “public woman,” Mrs. Hallam challenged the “gendered notions of separate spheres” the creation of which, Mary Beth Norton argues, was becoming more solidified in Anglophone culture, particularly in Colonial America, by the 1750s. What makes Mrs. Hallam’s role as Portia in her first American play even more poignantly challenging to social norms in that location, was that it was a breeches role. See Mary Beth Norton, *Separated by Their Sex* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), introduction.

<sup>184</sup> Bernard Sheehan’s *Savagism and Civility: Indians and Englishmen in Colonial Virginia*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980) argues that the root of violence between the English and the native populations was created by pre-imagined myth of the savage nature of these people. Further, Sheehan argues that their “ignoble” (and thus “innocent”) character was seen to lack culture and civility or any ordered social structure inherent in European society. This myth, he argues, culminated in the 1622 massacre that resulted from the exploitation of this myth, a myth that continued through the eighteenth century. Sadly, the list of Anglo attendants is not extant, though the most important people living in Williamsburg are likely to have been present. While it is intriguing to think that a young George Washington might have attended this performance in 1752, Washington’s diary from that period does not survive and his name is not mentioned in several sources. Washington did visit the theatre in Williamsburg in November 1760, and it is possible that he attended theatre earlier as he was known to enjoy a good play.

<sup>185</sup> Grier points out that one might imagine Amouskositte’s wife onstage while the play was enacted, a practice while popular in London was less commonly employed in America, and as such she would have been right in the midst of the action. Grier, “Staging the Cherokee *Othello*,” 101.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid*, 101.

<sup>187</sup> Grier argues that the playhouse then became “a site where Indians could interrupt those fantasies with gestures that Britons seem to have willed themselves not to understand.” Grier, “Staging the Cherokee *Othello*,” 103.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>189</sup> The first documented role of a character in blackface appearing onstage is Lewis Hallm, Jr., when he performs the role in New York following the American Revolution.

<sup>190</sup> The Licensing Act of 1737 that required plays to be submitted to the Lord Chamberlain’s Office, made Shakespeare’s plays popular and thus they became part of the regular rotation of plays presented by traveling performers,. In addition, the Murray- Kean Company had performed *Othello* in New York in December 1751, suggesting the play’s popularity for American audiences.

<sup>191</sup> William Van Lennep, et. al., eds., *Index to the London Stage 1660-1800*, (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1979), 771.

<sup>192</sup> *Virginia Gazette* 17 November 1752, 2. Seilhamer remarked in his nineteenth-century history of American theatre that “the simplicity exhibited by ‘the Empress’ at the play was more than equaled by the grotesque servility of the high-flown language in which the visit of savage royalty to the theatre is described.” See Seilhamer, *History of the American Theatre*, 42.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>194</sup> The visual nature of eighteenth-century consumers was fed by theatrical productions and newspaper advertisements. As such, theatre and newspapers were both perfect mediums for cultivating what was fashionable in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century transatlantic Anglophone society. Theatre acted (literally and figuratively) as a way in which Anglophone society could share cultural, social and political connections in a visual and auditory manner. Newspapers also offered a type of “public” performance as they were shared and read out loud in coffee houses or in more private settings and announced international and local news along with tempting consumer goods and services. Thus newspapers, like theatre, acted as a forum for cultural, social and political exchange and served as a form of cultural “diplomacy” in a similar way to how actresses and actors helped exchange cultural ideas. Like theatre, newspapers served as a form of entertainment, and surprisingly, like theatre, newspapers did not require one to have the ability to read for there were plenty of literate readers willing to “perform” the news to an audience. Both newspapers and theatre were written, both were spoken, both provided entertainment, encouraged cultural exchange within the larger Anglophone transatlantic world, utilized audiences and preyed on consumerism for their survival. Ileana Baird argues that “the thirst for fame on the stage and in the press” made for an “uneasy, though almost symbiotic existence” between newspapers and theatre. In addition, Baird argues that while plays often included vitriolic prologues, epilogues or front material that derided newspapers and theatre critics, “theatre also needed the press, and not just as an advertising vehicle” since many performers craved “the same celebrity status as the heroes and heroines they brought to life. Like these characters, playwrights and actors, producers and promoters, were fully aware of the power of the press and its role in promoting cultural trends.” Ileana Baird, *Social Networks in the Long Eighteenth Century: Clubs, Literary Salons, Textual Coteries* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 119. Surprisingly, considering the importance of both these mediums in transferring ideas and in shaping American culture during the late eighteenth century, the relationship between newspapers and theatre has been little explored. Newspapers nurtured, encouraged and cultivated the idea of celebrity just as much as theatre and just as vigorously as theatre. The cost of an annual subscription of the *Virginia Gazette*, the colony’s only newspaper from 1736-1766, was fifteen shillings in 1736 through 1766 and twelve shillings six pence from 1766 through the 1770s. For the same price a consumer could have purchased 36 almanacs, another important and highly read printed paper, between 1736 and 1766, or the reduced number of 28 almanacs between 1766 and the 1770s. Jacob M. Blosser, *Pursuing Happiness: Cultural Discourse and Popular Religion in Anglican Virginia, 1700-1770* (Ann Arbor, MI: ProQuest, 2006) 255. In comparison, *The Spectator*, a daily London paper published originally by Joseph Addison and Richard Steel, cost three times this amount, though it, too, maintained readers in America and was sold in an eight-volume collection at a cost of between one pound six shillings and one pound twelve shillings, six pence (or the equivalent of 63 almanacs). The nine-volume collection sold for one pound, nineteen shillings and six pence. Blosser, *Pursuing Happiness*, 253. For individuals not interested in reading the paper but in drawing attention to their goods or services, weekly advertisements, such as those Lewis Hallam took out, cost advertisers three shillings for the first week and two shillings for each following week. Newspapers maneuvered public sentiment in the same way that performances engaged with audience sentiment. Newspapers, because they were easily transported, reasonably inexpensive, popular and accessible, helped craft an individual’s celebrity status just as a performance, also easily transported, reasonably inexpensive, popular and accessible helped to craft a performer’s status as a celebrity. The original purpose of newspapers was to dispense imperial and colonial news throughout the growing British Empire, making them by the mid-eighteenth century reliable cosmopolitan sources and arbiters of truth. In newspapers, consumers had a dependable place to look for the latest international, colonial, local and shipping news. By the middle of the eighteenth century, consumers could depend on newspapers to publicly advertise upcoming performances and social events

alongside the latest products in the most fashionable styles and for the most reasonable prices. Not only that, newspapers provided readers with more engaging information than the often tedious and less flamboyantly rendered news they also contained. Newspapers became useful to acting companies for several reasons. They could announce upcoming performances either paid for by the manager or that a local editor devised in preparation for the arrival of a new touring group. Advertisers appealed to a consumer's desire for quality service and treatment. Merchants and artisans advertising in newspapers knew that in order to make newspaper advertising a successful marketing ploy in this age of consumer choice, they needed to appeal to a customer's sense of fashion, to the customer's sense of economy, and to the customer's desire to be well served. *The Boston News-Letter*, 5 May 1768 from <http://infoweb.newsbank.com>, newspapers on the database made available from the American Antiquarian Society. By the end of the eighteenth century newspapers had increased the number of money-making advertisements that both encouraged readership by providing an additional service and helped fund newspapers financially. Breen suggests, "[n]ewspapers heralded the arrival of a vast new consumer culture. Creatures of the marketplace, they carried messages about existing goods of every sort." Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution*, 53. Provincial New England newspapers "served the needs of an expanding commercial empire." Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution*, 54. From the mid 1700s on, one-quarter (one to two pages) of the printed material in American newspapers was dedicated to advertising. Whether newspapers and their advertisements helped to create what Breen called the "Consumer Revolution" or whether consumer demand fueled the creation of newspaper advertisements, merchants, artisans, and consumers buying or selling property, human and otherwise, were eager to try out, what seems to have been, a very successful marketing strategy. Some newspapers were entirely dedicated to advertising by mid-century without the pretense of including news, which provided easy access for consumers to various goods and services available locally, in neighboring New England cities, and in cities further afield. Newspapers, once wholly dedicated to bringing news to New England from overseas, had found their niche in consumer savvy New England where customers were used to having and making choices. A typical newspaper of the mid-eighteenth century consisted of four pages, two pages printed on each side of the paper. *The Boston News-Letter* contained two-columns on each of its two pages and while there is a great variety of news, discerning one report from another is next to impossible as there is little variation in font style throughout the paper. Simply reading through the first few issues suggests that *The Boston News-Letter's* editor, postmaster Nicolas Boone, appears not to have aspirations for a great literary career. The news Boone included was copied directly from other English and European papers. This alone suggests a shift in the colonies away from the dependence on oral culture in dissipating and sharing news toward a dependence on the written word. The main thrust of the early newspapers like *The Boston News-Letter* appears to be keeping the public informed of English and European happenings. As Charles Clark argued, newspapers offered "the world view, by and large, of the upper-class, cultivated, ethnocentric, and fiercely patriotic Protestant English male." See Charles E. Clark, *The Public Prints*, 11. In 1725, four newspapers were printed in colonial America, three of which came from Boston printers. By 1739, twelve newspapers were published in colonial America, more than double the number that had been published in 1728. This suggests that by the middle of the eighteenth century, newspapers had become "a vital element in the political, commercial, and even literary life of England and her American Colonies." Not only were these newspapers important in dispersing information to colonists, newspapers "contained advertising, which can give us clues to the different audiences in England and America that advertisers intended to each and to the importance of newspaper advertising to the respective systems of marketing that were used on the two sides of the Atlantic." Clark, *The Public Prints*, 6, 8, 165. At the end of the eighteenth century, approximately eighty papers were published throughout America and a significant portion of those came from New England: fifteen from Massachusetts, eleven from Connecticut, seven from New Hampshire, six from Vermont, four from Rhode Island, three from Maine. According to Mary Beth Norton, "Middling and elite Anglo-Americans sought to enhance their ties to the mother country by following its cultural trends closely" and they could do this both by reading newspapers that contained recent news of political, social, economic and cultural activities abroad and by visiting a group of performers fresh from London. Thus Hallam's claim that the clothing, decorations and scenes were all new and of the highest quality, crafted by London's best and 'excell'd by none in Beauty and Elegance" presents the opportunity for Virginians to experience a piece of London many might never have seen and supports Norton's argument that Anglophone colonists wished to remain connected with Britain. Cultural trends were clearly evident in the

news and advertisements newspapers collected and were equally translated through performances transatlantic actors presented to audiences throughout the Atlantic world. Mary Beth Norton, *Separated by Their Sex*, 120.

<sup>195</sup> See *Native Acts: Indian Performance, 1603-1832*, ed. Joshua David Bellin and Larua L. Mielke (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 2011); Julie Stone Peters, *Theatre of the Book, 1480-1880: Print, Text, and Performance in Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); *Atlantic Worlds in the Long Eighteenth Century: Seduction and Sentiment*, ed. Toni Bowers and Tita Chico (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012). In addition, it should be noted that the press played an important part in shaping America and that literacy was significant in the formation of America an engaged and informed public. For example, in 1748, George Fisher's book *The Instructor; or, American Young Man's Best Companion*, said: "Tis to ye Press & Pen we Morals owe / All we believe & almost all we know." George Fisher, *The Instructor; or, American Young Man's Best Companion*, (New York: Printed and sold by H. Gaines, 1748), title page. Specific literacy numbers are not available although examining wills (wherein the deceased left lists of books), looking at lists of news or booksellers in particular regions and subscription rates, and even the ability of people to sign legal documents can offer insight into literacy rates amongst early American citizenry.

<sup>196</sup> By the 1790s, itinerant theatre companies could boast unprecedented professionalism as acting troupes now performed in permanent theatre structures with celebrity-status performers recruited specifically because of name and reputation, a topic addressed more fully in the following chapters.

<sup>197</sup> In fact, it is interesting to see how Rogers Anglicizes Pontiac's behavior and project upon him a European mien and view of slavery, courage, and the willingness to die for a cause so that Anglo audiences could identify with his character;

Know you whose Country you are in? Think you, because you have subdu'd the French, That Indians too are now become your Slaves? This Country's mine, and here I reign as King; I value not your Threats, nor Forts, nor Guns; I have got Warriors, Courage, Strength, and Skill. (I, iii, 61-68)

Here we see that while Rogers challenges his Anglo audience (with no recorded performances of *Ponteach* one can imagine Rogers' "audience" as "reader") to recognize their own ill treatment of the Indians, he also essentially erases Pontiac's race and voice by making him no different in spirit from the Americans or Europeans with whom he fights. The play, *Le Pere-Indien*, which received an amateur performance, presented the story of an Indian father who sacrifices his life for his son—foreshadowing the idea of the noble savage character often portrayed in later American theatre. LeBlanc de Villeneuve also presents an identifiable character (as loving father) for European/Anglo audiences.

<sup>198</sup> Rogers's views of Indian life and how Indians attempted to adjust to and "translate" English authority were those of a military man. As such Rogers presents an overly simplified dichotomy of contemporary English opinions concerning Indians with one side believing they are men with rights and the other side believing they are fools meant to be cheated. For example, a trader in the play comments, "I've Rum and Blankets, Wampum, Powder, Bells, And such-like Trifles as they're wont to prize." (I. i., 23-24) Yet when he is encouraged by another trader to cheat the Indians, he remarks; "Not a Sin to cheat an Indian, say you? Are they not Men? hav'n't they a Right to Justice. As well as we, though savage in their Manners?" (I. i, 30-32).

<sup>199</sup> The Tammany Society, which included the likes of Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Rush, became an important society in forging a new national identity. This Society believed that America provided the best and noblest aspects of America (represented by Indians) and Europe. They also believed Indians represented new ideas that might free Americans from the antiquated ideas of Europe. King Tammany, a Delaware chief friendly with William Penn, came to symbolize this drive for a new national identity. Hatton's play, in keeping with the Tammany Society's beliefs, trumpeted Republicanism. One reviewer commented that *Tammany* was "a symbol of republicanism... patronized by the hot-heads of New York, to the utter rout of the aristocrats" while another said that the audience from the first performance presented "a riot or a frolic." Alan Leander MacGregor, "Tammany: The Indian as Rhetorical Surrogate,"

*American Quarterly*, XXXV, 4 (Fall, 1983), 400-401. See also George Clinton Densmore Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1927-1949), I, 341, 346-348.

<sup>200</sup> *Tammany* contained at least twenty-two songs and both is the first known libretto written by a woman and the first major opera libretto written in the United States with an implicitly American theme. Hatton recently arrived in America with her husband William, and joined a growing group of successful thespians who crossed the Atlantic after the American Revolution.

<sup>201</sup> On 11 June 1783 George Washington wrote in his last Circular to the States; “The Citizens of America, placed in the most enviable condition, as the sole Lords and Proprietors of a vast tract of Continent, comprehending all the various soils and climates of the World, and abounding with all the necessaries and conveniences of life, are now, by the late satisfactory pacification, acknowledged to be possessed of absolute Freedom and Independency; They are from this period to be considered as the Actors on a most conspicuous Theatre, which seems to be peculiarly designated by Providence, for the display of human greatness and felicity...” George Washington to John Hancock (Circular), 11 June 1783. A long-time admirer of theatre, Washington attended dozens of plays during his lifetime. Including a performance in Barbados in 1751 of *The London Merchant; or, The History of George Barnwell*, a 1771 performance of *The Recruiting Officer* in Dumfries, Virginia, a performance of *The West Indian* given by the American Company in Annapolis, Maryland in 1772, *Love in a Camp, or Patrick in Prussia* performed in Philadelphia in 1787, an impressive three performances of *School for Scandal*—twice in New York City 1789, 1791 and once in Philadelphia in 1792, as well as Shakespeare’s ever-popular tragedy, *Julius Caesar* in New York in 1790. Washington was a regular audience member in performances given by the London Company whenever they performed in Virginia and on 11 May 1778, at the end of a hard winter in Valley Forge, Washington staged his favorite play, Joseph Addison’s *Cato* (1713) in spite of the 1774 ban on theatre enacted by the Continental Congress who saw theatre as a corrupt influence on American society. The play could have been used to rally the troops with its republican ideology and it could easily have been staged for the officers as an emblem of gentility.

<http://gwpapers.virginia.edu/documents/george-washington-to-john-hancock-circular-11-june-1783/>

<sup>202</sup> See Randall Fuller, “Theaters of the American Revolution: The Valley Forge *Cato* and the Meschianza in Their Transcultural Contexts,” *Early American Literature* 34 (1999), 126-146. Fuller writes, “For the ragged soldiers in Washington’s camp Addison’s tragedy offered a salient version of national destiny characterized by self-sacrifice, republican virtue, and an almost boundless devotion to the principle of liberty,” 128. In addition, as previously mentioned in Chapter Three, for Robert Dinwiddie and the Williamsburg residents, their British identity was reinforced simultaneously by the faults of the dark-skinned Othello and by the presence of the Cherokee leaders in the theatre—and by their guests’ uncultivated reaction to the play. The play reassured local residents of their “Englishness” and worked to establish a national identity in cultural affiliation that differentiated itself from the “savage” or those individuals the colonists imagined to be subordinated native residents just as it might have served as a warning of their cultural differences.

## CHAPTER 4

### HALLAM WOMEN AND THE CULT OF CELEBRITY IN THE LATE-EIGHTEENTH CENTURY (1752-1782)

#### Introduction

As we have seen in Chapter Two, the idea of the celebrity actress began to emerge in the late seventeenth century, but took on a new shape and centrality in the eighteenth century. Most of London's earliest actresses were drawn from the lowest classes. Prostitutes, orange girls, pub serving wenches, and street sellers were used to performing publicly; selling themselves onstage differed little from their usual methods of earning money. Many of the first Anglophone actresses like Nell Gwyn fanned the flames of public gossip with their own private (and not so private) intrigues less to promote their art as performers than to gain audience attention and make money.<sup>1</sup> In fact the stage made it easier for most of these women to market themselves to wealthy clientele and to sell themselves for financial gain. Many early actresses raised their social positions from prostitute to gentleman's wife or even in the cases of Nell Gwyn and (Mary) Moll Davis, became mistresses to the king.<sup>2</sup> They established an active interest in and market for actresses and even though their private lives caused scandal, they were also highly entertaining, engaging, and clever women who gave Anglophone theatre a new focal point and brought new themes, heroines, and social conventions into public conversation. The life Gwyn lived and her sudden ascent to king's mistress and into London's elite society was only possible because theatre helped blur social boundaries, enhanced by their ability to transform themselves onstage.<sup>3</sup> The temporality of performance allowed actresses to transform themselves into permanent positions of social acceptance among British high society, positions that Anglophone women during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries rarely achieved outside of theatre.

While many of the first Anglophone actresses used the stage as a marketing ploy to improve their own social standing, the majority of second wave of celebrity actresses, women performing on Anglophone stages beginning in the 1730s through 1800, saw the stage as a legitimate profession and worked hard to gain public acceptance of their performances as professionals. They were more focused on their careers as performers and less focused on social climbing through marriage. During this period one family, the Hallam family, produced four actresses whose performances and careers provide intriguing examples of how actresses transformed into celebrities and how their performances and careers transformed the transatlantic stage. Two of these women, Ann Hallam Barrington and Isabella Hallam Mattocks, remained in London where they became premier performers. Two of these women, Mrs. (Lewis) Hallam and Nancy Hallam, traveled transatlantically and performed throughout America and the British Caribbean serving as significant cultural diplomats during a period of social, political, and economic unrest. This chapter brings together the idea of the actress as celebrity discussed in Chapter two and transatlantic cultural diplomacy enacted by newly minted celebrity actresses between 1752 and 1772, along with an analysis of American theatre as it grew to represent to the American public both the best and worst about British society and culture. This chapter also looks at when and where these women performed to see how location and historical moments determine the degree of celebrity-ness available to them. By 1752, when three of these four women performed (Isabella was a child but she had already taken to the stage) theatre became a means to an end and allowed women to support their families. Mothers/wives/daughters actively participated in family acting companies and acting allowed women (married, mothers, widows, unmarried) to work and travel as acceptable, admirable, even celebrated professionals.

The accomplishments on the London stage of Ann Barrington, Isabella Mattocks and to some extent Mrs. Hallam/Douglass early on in her career become more remarkable in light of just how few positions were available annually for theatre company performers (approximately five

lead actors and actresses might make up a company totaling thirty or forty people). This meant that for the three Royal London theatres, between twelve and fifteen women took lead roles, and other two dozen took supporting roles, and since competition was fierce for these few roles actresses could easily find themselves overshadowed by more popular performers. Thus during the mid-eighteenth century, fewer than two dozen women might be considered lead actresses in any one year in all of London's theatres and perhaps only a handful of these actresses might in turn be considered celebrities.

However, when opportunities opened up for theatre in America Anglophone actresses jumped at the opportunity to make names for themselves and most of these first actresses in America (like the first British actresses beginning in 1660) became celebrities because of their novelty and their association British theatre, which theatre managers made sure to advertise in local papers. While Mrs. Hallam/Douglass had experienced moderate success onstage on London that saw her gainfully and consistently employed, traveling to America completely changed her career and her significance as a performer. She became America's first professional actress, she was celebrated and admired for her performances, she earned rave reviews and she set the standard by which future generations and actresses in America were judged. Along with her niece, Nancy, Mrs. Hallam/Douglass brought a high level of professionalism to Anglophone theatre on the American stage. Mrs. Hallam/Douglass and Nancy Hallam in particular used their celebrity status to become cultural diplomats both in helping to establish and legitimize theatre in America—Nancy Hallam became the first performer—male or female—to have her portrait painted in 1771 by Charles Willson Peale, a tradition of celebrating actresses in portraiture long in practice in England but as yet unknown in America.

Ann Hallam Hale Barrington and Isabella Hallam Mattocks, on the other hand, were good enough and well-connected enough in London that they did not need to leave to ensure financial success. Instead of traveling with Lewis Hallam's London Company of Comedians in

1752, Ann Barrington (Lewis Hallam's sister and Mrs. Hallam's sister-in-law) and Isabella Mattocks (Lewis and Mrs. Hallam's six-year-old daughter) remained in Britain where they were constantly employed, primarily performing during their decades-long careers in London at the Covent Garden Theatre. The unique position and ultimate celebrity status of Isabella Mattocks, who became the most successful and celebrated actress of these four women, provide an illuminating contrast to the other three Hallam women whose may have worked as hard or harder to make names for themselves but who, for whatever reason were simply not at the right place at the right time, or perhaps didn't have quite that unique quality that transforms someone into a celebrity. Since three of the four Hallam children accompanied their parents across the Atlantic to tour America with the London Company, it is possible that the Hallams already recognized in Isabella that unique quality and left her behind intentionally so that she would be given the opportunity to train and perform with her more successful and better connected aunt and uncle. Examining this family of four impressively influential Hallam women from two generations helps us to identify what made an actress into a celebrity as measured by four specific factors: length of their careers, public acknowledgement of their accomplishments in media culture and in portraiture, types of roles they performed, and the ways in which their participation in theatre transformed it.

### **Crafting Celebrity Actresses**

Anglophone society traditionally admired men for their power and money, women for their appearance and behavior. Translating this onto the stage, actors appeared in powerful positions as kings, dukes, or even as murderers, characters most audience members may not have identified with easily. Anglophone actresses on the other hand, often represented characters in vulnerable or sympathetic positions as ingénues, wives, sisters, daughters, even powerless queens. Beginning in 1660, actresses established a powerful emotional connection and level of non-

threatening intimacy with audiences, literally transforming women's actions into a public affair. Everyone wanted to know what they were wearing, whom they were entertaining and where, what they were doing, and with whom they were doing it. Thus, audiences were drawn to these women in a variety of ways—in order to protect them, possess them, admire them, and nurture them. Thus during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Anglophone actresses became the social barometer by which all women's actions might be measured. And because actresses were discussed publicly in gossip and in the media as well as paraded nightly onstage, members of the audience felt like they knew these women. This is a key point in establishing how and why actresses became celebrated. In addition, not only were these women more accessible, Anglophone audiences served to show how other women could and should act, though, if a female character deviated from society's expectations of women, playwrights very often publicly chastised or punished their female characters onstage for their transgressions.

Actresses cultivated their offstage antics and outrageous behavior to add to their onstage personae. Here I draw on the work of Felicity Nussbaum, who argues that the intimate relationships cultivated between actress and audience empowered actresses to choose their own roles and self-promotion, which in turn led to cultivating celebrity status for actresses.<sup>4</sup> Nussbaum grants actresses agency in cultivating their own success and in creating new definitions of femininity. I would agree with Nussbaum that these women had a hand in crafting their personae (or at least assisted in marketing themselves) in order to be celebrated and recognized as legitimate performers. Nussbaum further examines several eighteenth-century British actresses who rose to "star" status: Anne Oldfield, Susannah Cibber, Catherine Clive, Margaret Woffington, Frances Abington and George Anne Bellamy, and argues that these women engaged in a variety of social issues that helped propel them to fame, including reinforcing national identity and developing modes of fashion in order to promote public interest. She suggests that these women even cultivated a perceived "rivalry" amongst themselves in order to generate

public interest through gossip. Certainly gossip, good or bad, increased audience attendance and improved profits for theatres and performers. Nussbaum also notes that these actresses in their role as celebrities were among the first women (certainly among the first working-class women) to achieve social mobility, cultural authority and economic independence in British society.

Nussbaum's analysis supports the argument I make in this chapter that actresses were active agents in their careers. They often controlled the roles they performed (particularly as their fame rose), honed their skills to entertain a variety of audiences, provided an important cultural connection to Britain as the British Empire grew, contributed to the formation of national identity and challenged British society's social constructions of gender roles. Unlike Nussbaum, however, I argue that the cultivation of celebrity for actresses really began in the late seventeenth century almost immediately after they began appearing onstage rather than the eighteenth. I also argue that celebrity played out differently in the Americas than it did in Britain. First, because there were far fewer actresses in America, successful performers were almost immediately recognized—and most of these early actresses even appearing on the London stage gave them immediate recognition and (to American audiences) legitimacy, and celebrity status. Second, American audiences overall were more conservative, so that actresses performing in America needed to establish their moral legitimacy through their offstage lives and thus they were not celebrated for their illicit off-stage antics so much for their association with the London stage or for their legitimate professional onstage performances. Indeed the establishment of theatre in America during the eighteenth century I argue rested on the sound moral character of the performers, particularly actresses who became important transmitters in this cultural exchange. Actresses performing in America gained attention and social acceptance because their offstage lives were even more admirable than the average colonist rather than being gossip-worthy. While eighteenth-century actresses in Britain saw theatre as an opportunity to social climb—many left the stage once they were set up as mistresses or wives of London's social elite—eighteenth-

century actresses in America saw theatre as an opportunity to establish themselves as professionals. For the most part these women led reasonably unexceptional offstage existences, both because the opportunities to social climb were not available in the same manner as they were in Britain and because the success of theatre itself in America rested on the solid moral behavior of actresses. These eighteenth-century American actresses are remembered primarily for their performances onstage rather than for their offstage antics.

The cultivation of the cult of celebrity into Anglo culture and the promotion of actresses into celebrities between 1660 and 1800 were both directly tied to money. Plays and playbills announced the names of performers and after the appearance of actresses in 1660, name-dropping became a clear marketing ploy for theatre managers hoping to encourage audiences to choose a performance depending on who performed. This phenomenon did not exist when all-male casts performed, but became standard practice even when announcing minor plays with women actresses. Because everyone wanted a piece of (and profit from) actress performances<sup>5</sup> theatre managers and playwrights used actresses and their growing status as celebrities to turn a profit. Yet actresses also profited from being marketed as celebrities, which amplified during the eighteenth century.

By the mid-eighteenth century actress names regularly appeared alongside actors' names in newspapers (both as personal gossip and professional critiques), and actress fashions were widely imitated—both their personal style and their onstage character style. This practice of marketing actresses in England carried over to eighteenth-century America. When Mrs. Hallam joined the London Company of Comedians in America, her name was listed alongside her character roles, underneath the list of male performers as was common practice suggesting female characters as subordinate characters, but the names of actresses were published nonetheless. Leading artists of the period painted portraits of actresses, particularly popular London actresses, and by 1772 the practice of theatre portraiture had traveled to America. Once portraits were



Alamy BKYWJ7  
 Figure 4.1 Isabella Mattocks as Princess Catherine in Henry V.

painted, their images were transformed into more portable and more affordable etchings created on copper plates (good for a few hundred printings per plate) that the public purchased eagerly.

Actresses also received the personal attention of male admirers. Men on both sides of the Atlantic wrote “love poems” dedicated to actresses, like those written to Nancy Hallam in 1771.<sup>6</sup>

Costumes for eighteenth-century actresses often reflected the most fashionable dresses and became representative markers of status. The most common costumes required contemporary dresses with the addition of crowns, turbans, headdress, breastplates,

or scepters to bring them into character and thus actresses became the equivalent of modern-day models sashaying the latest designs for women in the audience to admire and copy (See Figure 4.1). While male interest helped propel these women to fame, women’s interest in the lives and performances of celebrities may have contributed more to the actual ascendancy of actresses into celebrities. By imitating actresses and their sense of style, their attitudes, and their mannerisms, by collecting affordable small portraits of these women in their most popular roles, and by purchasing and reading plays listing their names, I argue, women were integral in elevating actresses into celebrities.<sup>7</sup>



Figure 4.2 Isabella Mattocks as Mrs. Warren in Thomas Holcroft's comedy, *The Road to Ruin*. Courtesy of British Museum.

My argument about women making women into celebrities is new and has not yet been considered by other historians. According to Fred Inglis, for example in *A Short History of Celebrity* the idea of celebrity is an important "social adhesive" that unifies societies undergoing significant pressures from globalization, as the eighteenth century Anglophone world experienced

during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Inglis argues that the idea of celebrity-ness arose from the increased importance of the individual. Most importantly, and I agree, Inglis argues that celebrities showed audiences how to live, how to act and how to feel in their changing world. Actresses also made unique connections with their audiences because they were women, because they were vulnerable, because they portrayed characters who were non-threatening and more easily identifiable, establishing a significant emotional connection before performer and observer.



Figure 4.3 Isabella Mattocks as Lady Restless in Arthur Murphy's *All in the Wrong* (1761). Lady Restless examines a small portrait and comments, "This is a really handsome picture; what a charming countenance!" The comment Mattock's character makes reinforces the image of Mattocks herself with her own charming countenance preserved. Courtesy of University Library, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Actresses during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were often gifted cast-off dresses of wealthy elite, making their portrayals of queens and duchesses more realistic and believable (See Figure 4.2). Audience found actresses offstage to be credible members of London's social elite both because they had performed their roles so well onstage. It wasn't so difficult for actresses to continue performing as social elites themselves offstage and what they wore and how they carried themselves transformed everyday fashion (See Figure 4.3). These four images of Isabella Mattocks in costume suggest how eighteenth-century actresses dressed in contemporary style for their performances, modifying their costume with embellishments that suggested their character's social importance (seen in the overly elegant dress of Mattocks as Queen Catherine, Figure 4.1, in the more modest costume of Mattocks as Mrs. Warren in Figures



Figure 4.4 Isabella Mattocks as Elvira in John Dryden's *The Spanish Friar*.

4.2 and 4.3,<sup>8</sup> and in the portrait of Mattocks as the Spanish Elvira with fancy headdress and embellished skirts in Figure 4.4).<sup>9</sup> These portraits also reveal popular eighteenth century posturing, reflective of the period's acting styles. With her arms out, the histrionics of Isabella as Princess Catherine or as Elvira suggest the grand gestures and sense of empowerment of the character while the more demure positions of Mattocks either (ironically) sitting as Lady Restless or standing holding a fan and looking out toward the audience suggest the relatability of actresses to their audience.

American actresses, on the other hand, did not have the advantage of being favored by royalty for their costumes and instead wore costumes that were often slightly outdated in London though they might have appeared stylish and to American audiences.<sup>10</sup>

We have seen in Chapter three that the Hallam family played a significant role in the development and legitimization of theatre in North America, and that women were deeply involved in the success of these enterprises. In this section, I look more closely at specific aspects of their acting careers (where they performed, when they performed, attitudes of audience members over time and place, the influence of media culture) to understand what type of celebrity status each of these four Hallam women achieved: Ann Hallam Hale Barrington (fl. 1733-1773), Mrs. Hallam/Douglass (fl 1743-1773), Isabella Hallam Mattocks (1746-1826) and Nancy (Ann) Hallam (fl. 1758-1774). Beginning with an overview of the Hallam actresses in general, we look first at the idea of the celebrity and what it meant to be a celebrity actress in mid-eighteenth century London. Societal changes and the introduction of mass media and a global market added to the phenomenon of the “celebrity.”<sup>11</sup> Not all celebrity actresses in mid-eighteenth-century London were equal, suggesting that talent was not always important in cultivating celebrity, while marketing and the introduction of mass media were useful in the clever crafting and manufacturing of a celebrity. Two of these actresses, Ann Barrington and Isabella Mattocks, worked as successful actresses in Britain and Ireland. Three of these actresses (Ann Hallam Hale Barrington, Mrs. Hallam/Douglass and Isabella Hallam Mattocks) appeared in a combined total of 1796 recorded performances on London stages, primarily acting at the Covent Garden Theatre. Ann appeared in 492 recorded performances between 1739 and 1772, Mrs. Hallam in 274 recorded performances during her brief London stage tenure between 1746 and 1751, and Isabella in an astonishing 1030 recorded performances between 1752 and 1800 and quite possibly several dozen more unrecorded performances, as she added at least 13 new roles (and at least as many performances) between 1800 and 1808.

Of the four women, only Mrs. Hallam/Douglass and Nancy Hallam performed transatlantically. Ann Barrington and Isabella Mattocks were regularly and gainfully employed during the last half of the eighteenth century so that they did not have to struggle in their careers, though like most London performers, they did travel offseason (in London this meant usually during the summer months) to perform in Ireland and smaller rural theatres such as those in Bristol, Bath and Manchester. In contrast, Mrs. Hallam/Douglass began her career in England and Ireland but once she left England in 1752 with the London Company of Comedians she performed exclusively in America and in the British Caribbean and died in Philadelphia in 1774 in all likelihood never having returned to England.<sup>12</sup> Nancy Hallam, daughter of William Hallam, Lewis Hallam's brother and investment partner, began her career in America as a child actress, and has no recorded performances onstage in London. After the death of her father she was adopted by her aunt Mrs. Hallam/Douglass. She joined the family profession and performed with the American Company for fifteen years, impressing audiences and becoming the first American performer to have an official portrait made, before quietly retiring by 1774.

First we look at Ann Barrington, whose almost unremarkable life allowed her to achieve a decades-long career in one of London's licensed theatres. Second, we examine the career of Mrs. Hallam/Douglass, whose ascendancy to celebrity status really took off after she left London to perform in America and in the British Caribbean. Third, we look at the training, performances and career of Isabella Mattocks, comparing her time onstage in London with her aunt's and mother's careers as well as the careers of the most popular London actresses of her day to show how Isabella became the most recognized and celebrated of the Hallam actresses. Finally, we look at the public responses to Nancy Hallam's performances that appear in print in newspapers and images of the actress that appear in portraiture.

Transatlantic acceptance of actresses as celebrities and of American theatre occurred just before the American Revolution and will, as a later chapter argues, come into full force in the last

decade of the eighteenth century in America. All four Hallam women were connected to the theatre through family, but in unusual ways; the younger generation—Isabella and Nancy—were trained and raised by and performed with their aunts rather than by their own mothers. The level of celebrity status that the last two actresses discussed in this chapter achieved was much more public and pronounced (literally with their portraits painted in character) than that of the two women who helped train them for the stage and was also much more closely linked with public circulation of their celebrity status, particularly with newspapers.

### **The Hallam Women: An Overview**

Ann Hallam Hale Barrington and Mrs. Hallam/Douglass, as members of the older generation of Hallam actresses, give us an idea of what most women performing in London would have experienced or could expect to accomplish as competent, hard-working, consistently employed actresses between 1740-1780. They both came from acting families, married actors, and raised children as actors. Both women married twice after their husbands died and both women contributed financially to the family. Both women also adopted one of their sibling's daughters and successfully trained them for the stage. While Ann remained part of the Royal Covent Garden Theatre for almost thirty years, mostly in supporting rather than leading roles, her sister-in-law, Mrs. Hallam, who often took lead roles, only appeared onstage in London's non-licensed theatres, at her brother-in-law William Hallam's New Wells (or Goodman's) Theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields.<sup>13</sup> Leaving for America actually provided Mrs. Hallam/Douglass with the opportunity for fame and it was not until Mrs. Hallam crossed the Atlantic that she became a celebrity. With the arrival of the first professional players, the London Company of Comedians, Mrs. Hallam/ Douglass consistently entertained audiences for two decades before the American Revolution. Her success as an actress represents not only her own personal accomplishments as a professional player but suggests that she was an excellent theatrical ambassador for Anglophone

theatre. Her associations with the London stage helped establish her as a legitimate and desirable performer, and she became the standard by which later actresses in America were judged. Later, theatre managers would promote actresses by their associations with London theatres just as Lewis Hallam had done with his acting company. Actresses who had performed at one of the Patent (and thus more legitimate) London theatres, Drury Lane, Covent Garden, or the Haymarket, represented the pinnacle of British celebrities for American audiences. Audiences (just as in Charles II's time) were excited by this new phenomenon of the celebrity actress.

While Ann Barrington and Mrs. Hallam/Douglass performed admirably, they never became the celebrities that Nancy Hallam and Isabella Mattocks would become, in part due to the successful marketing of actresses in print culture that came later in the eighteenth century and partly due to audiences throwing their attention and admiration at actresses who seemed to become the symbol for British elegance, culture, intrigue, wit, and strength. Moreover they were identifiably human. The more successfully actresses became celebrities, the more print culture and mass media reported on their fame, and the more the public wanted to know these women. One of these four actresses, London-based Isabella became the most well-known and celebrated of the Hallam women—indeed she was likely the most successful of all the Hallam performers—although her cousin Nancy achieved similar, if not equal fame on the American stage.

Isabella Hallam Mattocks started as a child actress in London in 1752 just weeks after her family departed for America. Given her familial associations with the Hallam family and her direct mentorship under Covent Garden Theatre performers Ann and John Barrington, Isabella's rise to celebrity status during her decades-long career with the Covent Garden Theatre is understandable, even predictable. By her late teens, in the early 1760s, Isabella had already established herself as a premier actress in the Covent Garden Theatre, where she remained performing almost exclusively for forty-six years. During her career, Isabella had her portrait painted several times, and received her share of tawdry gossip in newspapers, suggesting that she

lived a very public life and had become a celebrity. While she traveled “the circuit” when London theatres were closed during the summers, Isabella did not cross the Atlantic her immediate family had. She did not need to since London audiences were more than interested in her performances.

Following the death of her father, William Hallam, Nancy joined Mrs. Douglass (formerly Hallam) in America in 1758. Isabella’s cousin, Nancy Hallam, followed a similar path as her cousin Isabella, and began as a child actress in small “utility” roles. Certainly, Nancy’s position as niece of the principal performer gave her the privilege of familial legitimacy. Like her cousin, Nancy never crossed the Atlantic to perform though she did eventually return to England where she retired from stage. And unlike the other three Hallam women mentioned in this chapter, Nancy does not appear on record as a performer in London or anywhere in England or Ireland. She achieved during her fifteen-year career with the American Company more recognition as a celebrity actress than had her aunt, Mrs. Hallam/Douglass had done. Before she was twenty, newspapers published poems to Nancy Hallam written by lovesick admirers who lauded her appearance and her performances. Charles Wilson Peale painted Nancy’s portrait in 1771, shortly before she retired from the stage in her early-twenties. Her portrait by Peale is the first portrait painted of any “American” performer appearing on the American stage. Nancy’s retirement from the stage in her early thirties corresponds to the American Company’s removal from America in 1774.

Isabella's and Nancy's accomplishments come on this second wave celebrity actresses, just at the moment when American theatre was teetering on the edge of cultural acceptance and just before theatre was banned from American stages for a period of approximately ten years.<sup>14</sup> Given the type of public admiration Nancy Hallam received during her acting career, she could easily be recognized as the first American celebrity actress if the measure of celebrity status rested on portraits and print culture. While Mrs. Hallam/ Douglass had one of the longest and most influential careers in American theatre (twenty years performing in America and in the British Caribbean), Nancy performed when America was looking for celebrities, most of whom

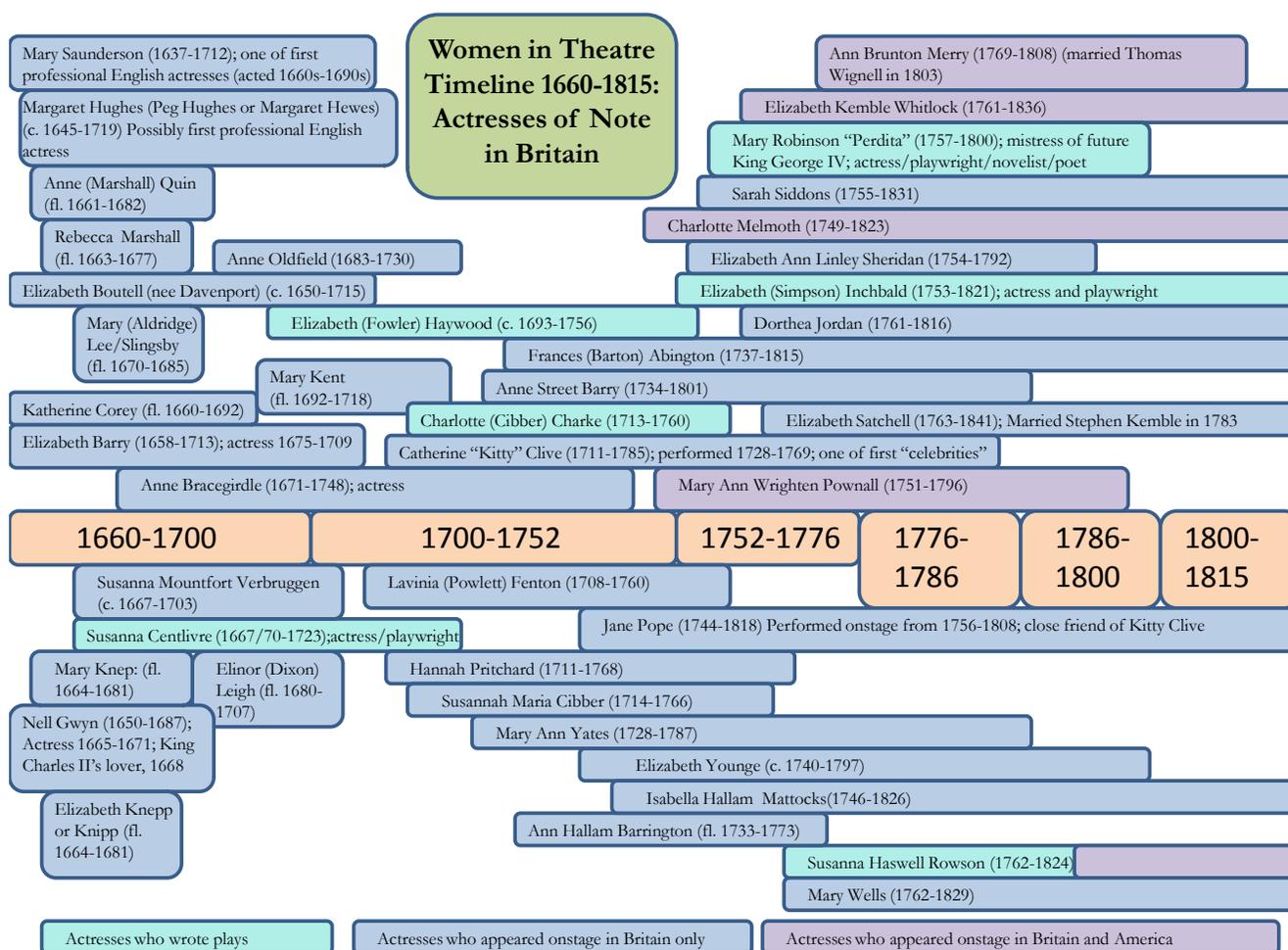


Figure 4.5 Late Seventeenth- and early Eighteenth-Century Actresses who performed in London Theatres with Ann Barrington, Mrs. Hallam/Douglass and Isabella Hallam.

were military, religious, and political leaders. Actresses were none of those and yet they did engage in social, political, religious, and cultural conversations. Subsequent sections of this chapter discuss each of these actresses and their roles, successes, influences and experiences in more detail, beginning with Ann Hallam Hale Barrington, and followed in subsequent order of birth by Mrs. Hallam/Douglass, Isabella Hallam Mattocks and Nancy Hallam.

### **Supporting Characters: Ann Hallam Hale Barrington**

Ann Hallam Barrington (c. 1720 - c. 1773) came from a family of well-established traveling actors who regularly put up booths at country fairs, performed in theatres on the rural circuit (including Bath, Bristol and Leeds), and occasionally appeared in more recognized theatres like Dublin's Stock Alley Theatre, the Theatre Royal Covent Garden and the Theatre Royal Drury Lane. Ann's father, Thomas Hallam (c. 1699- d, 1735) appeared on playbills at the Smock Alley Theatre in Dublin between 1707- 1724 and began to appear on playbills at London's Drury Lane Theatre by the 1724-1725 season. Her mother is not known to have been an actress and though it might be assumed she was involved with the family business, her name is not listed in playbills or theatre records. Four of Ann's five brothers, Adam (c.1718-1768), George (fl. 1745-1747), William (1712-1758?), and Lewis (c. 1714-1756?), were involved with theatre either as actors, stage managers, dancers, pyrotechnical artists, or musicians (usually possessing a combination of these skills). George Hallam performed in supporting acting roles and was a stage performer in London between 1745-1747. He helped manage William's New Wells Theatre at Goodman's Fields (See Figure 4.2.3). Adam was the most successful performer of this generation of Hallam performers. He first appeared in juvenile roles at Dublin's Smock Alley Theatre during the 1723-1724 season, and again through 1726-1727. He performed as a comic dancer at London's Drury Lane Theatre in 1727, and continued performing at Dublin's Smock Alley Theatre, Sadler's Wells Theatre in Bristol, Drury Lane Theatre and the Covent

Garden Theatre. During the 1767-1768 season Adam Hallam is on record as having received 1 £ per week salary at the Covent Garden Theatre though he died soon after on 2 June 1768. Only one brother, Thomas, was not an actor.<sup>15</sup> The “Hallam” listed alongside William’s name for a performance at London’s Haymarket Theatre in 1746 likely belonged to Lewis, given his age at the time.<sup>16</sup> Lewis’s influence on Ann’s career was not as a supportive brother, but rather as an absent parent. When Lewis Hallam and his wife left London in 1752, Ann Barrington adopted Lewis’s youngest daughter, Isabella, raising her in the theatre. Ann’s father was famously stabbed through his eye by a walking stick by fellow actor, Charles Macklin, while they wrestled over ownership of a wig (a significant investment for an actor) in the green room behind stage at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane during a performance of the farce *Trick for Trick*, on 10 May 1735.<sup>17</sup> He died the following day.

Ann was approximately fifteen at the time of her father’s death. Fortunately for her, her family’s involvement in theatre provided her with the training to become a professional actress. Ann’s brother William, who is best known as a theatre manager, had taken over management of the New Wells Theatre on Lemon/Leman Street by 1739, four years after his father’s death, when he was about twenty-seven years old and Ann was about nineteen. William remained almost exclusively a theatre manager rather than a performer after his father’s death, likely because he took over the role as manager of his family’s acting company. William certainly provided Ann with the most support among his siblings, and gave her significant opportunities to perform with the family and with his own New Wells Theatre. In 1751, William was forced to close his theatre due to bankruptcy, which likely generated his interest in investing in sending an acting troupe, including Lewis Hallam, to America. Always struggling to make his theatres a success, William died in Tortola in the British Virgin Islands in 1758, planning to start his own theatre company there six years after he funded his brother Lewis’s London Company of Comedians on their American tour.

While her name appears on record between 1737-1741, when she was between seventeen and twenty-one years of age, it is quite likely that she took on smaller roles as a child with her family's company. Ann participated in her family's touring company, including performing at the Bartholomew Fair, outside Aldersgate, London, every August.<sup>18</sup> She was certainly performing in 1733 at about age thirteen when her family performed together at the Canterbury Fair in Kent. The fair was meant to be three days but usually lasted four and sometimes trailed on longer. In 1735 the government limited the fair to its three-day charter, foreshadowing the limiting of theatrical performances by Britain's 1737 Theatre Licensing Act. The Act prohibited all public outdoor plays and performances at fairs. Fairs continued, but like London's unlicensed theatres, they were officially limited to musical productions that included dancing and singing. It was during her family's tour of Bartholomew Fair in 1737 that Ann met actor Sachereval Hale. She and Hale married before the 1739 season, and Ann now performed mostly in supporting roles at the Covent Garden Theatre under the name Mrs. Hale. After Hale's death in 1747, she married John Barrington in 1749, also an actor at the Covent Garden Theatre, performing and cultivating a public following for the next twenty-five years under her new name, Mrs. Barrington.

### **Bartholomew Fair**

Theatre in London was changing rapidly at the beginning of Ann's career. By 1735 one of the most popular summer festivals that took place just outside of London, the Bartholomew Fair was, experiencing economic challenges, and had been restricted to staging no more than three or four days of performances rather than the seven to ten days of performances previously allowed. As such, the investment and the effort to set up a tent for theatre companies for such a limited period made it much less economically viable. Even so, traveling the summer fair circuit and performing just outside London remained popular in spite of government restrictions. Theatre

companies simply had to be more careful about what they performed and how much they invested in their performances.

The non-licensed theatres (and summer festivals like those at the Bartholomew Fair) produced entertainments that involved music and dancing, productions that allowed them to hire cheaper performers and resulted in lower ticket prices that in turn attracted crowds from London's lower classes. Before the passage of the Theatre Licensing Act of 1737 rules were looser about what types of productions were performed at country fairs, and acting companies regularly performed London's most popular plays truncated and transformed into musicals. The 1737 Theatre Licensing Act considered ballad operas "legal" performances, though by London standards they were also considered an inferior art form since plays were meant to enlighten audiences with social and political insights while performances with singing and dancing were seen to be merely entertainments without intellectual edification. Because of censorship restrictions, entertainments produced at the Bartholomew Fair now had to be exclusively musicals or operas, no serious drama was allowed, but they could include dancing, tumblers and other acrobats.

This change in British theatre is shown by the scope of William Hallam's theatre company during 1737, in which Ann, her brothers, and their wives participated. William Hallam, in partnership with another manager, arranged for the performance of *Fair Rosamond*, the ballad opera *The Modern Pimp; or, The Doctor Deceiv'd* to be performed at the 1737 Bartholomew Fair. Hallam's theatre booth at the fair that summer also featured Samuel Johnson's opera, *All Alive and Merry*, along with an unknown ballet, and Italian tumblers and acrobats.<sup>19</sup> In 1738, the fair was held over four days from 28-31 August, and in 1740 William Hallam's booth produced *The Rambling Lovers; or, A New Way to Play an Old Game* (also technically operas) along with requisite tumblers and dancers to draw the crowd's attention. These were performances that William Hallam had staged previously at his New Wells Theatre he had opened in 1739. By

1741, the Bartholomew Fair entertainments were limited even further to prohibit ballet and dancing altogether, allowing only light entertainments in the form of ballad operas. Such limitations meant that performers began to look beyond London for summer employment and to work the provincial circuit more rigorously, including traveling to perform in towns at a greater distance from London such as Bristol, Canterbury, Ipswich and Birmingham along with the regular tours in Bath, Kent, and further afield in Dublin.

### **Marriage and the Covent Garden Theatre**

During her time performing with her family at the Bartholomew Fair in the late 1730s, Ann Hallam met fellow performer Sacheverel Hale (c.1711-1746), who was at the time performing with John Rich's company at the Theatre at Lincoln's Inn Fields and the Covent Garden Theatre (the familial connection extends as Rich was quite possibly Mrs. Hallam's father). Ann Hallam and Sacheverel Hale married before the 1739-1740 theatre season (when Ann was approximately twenty-two years old). During his relatively short lifetime, Sacheverel regularly performed at the Covent Garden Theatre, though he also appeared at the New Wells Theatre during his last year onstage. Through Sacheverel, Ann also became a regular cast member at the Covent Garden Theatre. Ann and Sacheverel performed in London together, and traveled the theatre circuit in summers to perform at the Canterbury Fair and at the Jacob's Wells Theatre in Bristol between 1738 and 1746.

When Sacheverel Hale died in 1747, he left behind his wife (aged c. 30), a young son (age c. 7), and a daughter named Mary Anne (c. 1743-1805). Ann raised her daughter, Mary Ann, alongside her cousin, Isabella Hallam (discussed in detail in the section).<sup>20</sup> In June 1754, a "Miss Hallam," likely Ann's niece, little Isabella Hallam, is listed among the players alongside the Barrington's names. Five days after Ann's first husband's death on 27 August 1746, she was given a charity benefit night at the Covent Garden Theatre, where she earned almost 50 £.<sup>21</sup> This

benefit night is worth approximately \$14,000 today and represents at least one third to half Ann's family's annual income in 1747. Fortunately for Ann, she was a steadily-employed actress and could provide for her family, albeit in a more reduced manner than when they had a two-income family. After her first husband's death, Ann continued performing onstage at the Sadler's Wells Theatre in Bristol and at the Covent Garden Theatre in London. In June 1749, almost two years after Sacheverel Hale died, Ann married, Irish actor John Barrington (1715-1773) when she was about thirty-two years old. From this point on she performed under the name Mrs. (John) Barrington until at least 1773, after which there are no more recorded references of Ann or Mrs. Barrington appearing onstage.

What must have been one of her final performances, Ann appeared onstage in Liverpool in the summer of 1773 along with Isabella Mattocks (her adopted daughter) and Isabella's husband, George Mattocks.<sup>22</sup> By the winter of 1773, Isabella Mattocks and her husband were once again performing at London's Covent Garden Theatre, but no mention is made of Ann Barrington accompanying them. The sudden absence of Ann Barrington's name from stage records suggests that she may also have died in 1773, shortly after her husband, John's death in January of that year. It is possible that she died between the summer of 1773 and that winter since, given her circumstances and her need for an income, it is likely that Ann would have continued performing to support herself after her husband died if she were capable. She would not have been unduly old, perhaps around fifty-three years of age, though each of her four acting brothers had predeceased her, suggesting family health issues or that theatre life was particularly physically demanding on the Hallam family. Ann Barrington's sister-in-law, Mrs. Hallam/Douglass died in the September 1773 on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean in Philadelphia, around the same time Ann disappeared from stage records, bringing to an end not only the older generation of Hallam actresses but that entire generation of Hallam family performers.

Throughout her forty-year career, Ann thrived as an actress. She remained steadily employed, served as a mentor for her niece, Isabella, and for her own children. Several of Ann Barrington's peers became national celebrities, including Frances Abington, Kitty Clive, Anne Barry, Hannah Pritchard, Lavinia Fenton, Mary Anne Yates, and Charlotte Charke. (See Figure 4.2.1 for a more complete list of actresses who performed during the period Ann Barrington appeared onstage). Yet overall Ann was less renowned of the women discussed in this chapter though her story is important as the baseline against which the success and recognition of other transatlantic actresses can be measured. She maintained a successful if not particularly exceptional career as a supporting actress with London's elite Covent Garden Theatre. She married twice, both times to actors who were well-admired and with whom it appears she was happy. Ann's support, training and influence over Isabella Hallam likely helped propel her niece's career onto the London stage and soon Isabella's career overshadowed her aunt's career. Ann Barrington represents the type of actress most women aspired to become during the mid-eighteenth century, steadily employed, respected, adequately paid, and socially accepted.

Compared to other mid-eighteenth-century London and transatlantic actresses who became legitimate and identifiable celebrities during their careers, including the three other Hallam women discussed in this chapter, Ann Barrington led a fairly uneventful, almost lackluster life as a professional stage performer, yet her career was also stable and she led a financially secure life. Even though never reaching celebrity status to the same degree that many of her contemporary London actresses achieved, she stands as the example of the type of stable, consistently admired, and publicly recognized performers that many eighteenth-century actresses aspired to become and therefore should be used as a measure of success for mid-eighteenth-century actresses in London. Ultimately, even though Ann Hallam Hale Barrington might not be as recognizable as her peers or that interesting in her accomplishments, she managed to make a forty-year career for herself as a continuous member of one of London's licensed theatres,

maintained two stable marriages to actors outliving them both, all the while raising three children (one of whom she adopted), each of whom performed onstage with varying degrees of success on the London stage. So while Ann Barrington never cultivated a memorable celebrity status, she begins our story because she managed to become a successful career performer in London and she led a successful life that allowed her to work with her family, travel, receive public acclaim, support herself and her family on her own and train a new generation how to act.



Figure 4.6 Portrait identified previously as Mrs. Lewis Hallam and more recently as Mrs. John Hallam by Thomas Gainsborough Courtesy of the Art Museum at University of Kentucky.

### **Mrs. Hallam/Douglass**

#### **Overview**

Mrs. Hallam (c. 1720-1773/4) is one of the most important and influential Hallam actresses discussed in this chapter because of her transatlantic performances and her influence on American theatre during the mid-eighteenth century, though she may also be considered the least recognized “celebrity” in the Hallam family. In spite of the myriad accomplishments Mrs. Hallam achieved during her lifetime as an actress who performed in London, the British Caribbean and America, little is known about her life, including her first name, her family background or when

(or even if) she was officially married to Lewis Hallam, Sr. Limited evidence of her family is located in a letter that her daughter Isabella Mattocks wrote a letter in 1800 to biographer, J. Hill suggesting that “Mr Rich the late Patentee of Cov: Garden & his family are my relatives.”<sup>23</sup> The association with the Rich family suggests the interconnectedness and intermarriage of theatre families since John Rich (1692-1761) was theatre manager of Lincoln’s Inn Fields (1714) and Covent Garden Theatre (1732), and was descended from Christopher Rich (1657-1714), an abrasive theatre manager at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane in 1688, the United Company from 1693, and who built a new theatre at Lincoln’s Inn Fields just before his death. What Mrs. Hallam looked like is just as cloudy as where she came from. A copy of one portrait previously identified by theatre historian Phillip Highfill as Mrs. Lewis Hallam (See Figure 4.6) was recently identified to be a portrait by Thomas Gainsborough of a Mrs. *John* Hallam, not Mrs. *Lewis* Hallam.<sup>24</sup> While portraits of Mrs. Hallam may have been made, she was the leading lady at the Lincoln’s Inn Fields Theatre at the time of David Garrick’s first success, which suggests that there was likely public interest in her portraiture, no strong portraits of her are known to have survived. However, Mrs. Hallam’s success and ascendancy to celebrity status as America’s first professional actress cannot be assessed by her lack of portraits in print culture, particularly since portraiture was not popular in America when she performed there during the height of her career. Despite the limited information that survives about her life and career, Mrs. Hallam rose to become perhaps the most significant and influential transatlantic actress of the eighteenth century. She remained the London/American Company’s premier actress for over a decade until she was replaced by younger (more celebrated) actresses, like her niece Nancy Hallam, Maria Storer and Margaret Cheer. While Mrs. Hallam appears regularly in print in theatre playbills for three decades beginning in 1746 in London and continuing until 1773 in Philadelphia, her first name is not known. Because several “Mrs. Hallam’s” appear on playbills in London and in Britain, it can only be assumed which “Mrs. Hallam” was performing as Adam, William, and Lewis Hallam each

married actresses with whom they performed. The Mrs. Hallam with whom we are concerned for this discussion married Lewis Hallam, Sr., manager of the London Company of Comedians, with whom she left for America with three of her children and ten other adults in 1752. Like her sister-in-law, Ann, Mrs. Hallam led a relatively stable life. She maintained a successful career, married two theatre manager/actors, raised three of her four children whom she trained for the stage, and adopted her niece, Nancy. Transatlantic travel was not always safe and thus Mrs. Hallam faced more challenges than her sister-in-law, Ann, but she also reaped more rewards.<sup>25</sup> Philadelphia newspapers mention Mrs. Hallam/Douglass's death in 1773, which Phillip H. Highfill contests as probably an erroneous date making the circumstances of her death just as clouded in mystery as her life.<sup>26</sup> No other study, to my knowledge, examines Mrs. Hallam as a celebrity actress or compares her experiences and accomplishments to other members of her extended family.

While much of her life is shrouded in mystery, what we do know of Mrs. Hallam is that she was a talented and adored performer, and that she achieved a level of celebrity status that helped to elevate American theatre more generally. She was described by Joseph Norton Ireland, as being "Far superior to any actress who had preceded her, she retained for many years all the kind feelings of the public, who regarded her with an admiration reaching almost to idolatry."<sup>27</sup> Arthur Hornblow said of her, "Mrs. Hallam was not only a beautiful woman, but an actress of no ordinary merit."<sup>28</sup> She was also elected, as the most recognized and celebrated performer in the company, to give the Epilogue for the 1758 opening season in New York, setting the tone for the performance and asking for the audience's continued support.

Theatre companies in America demanded they be paid in specie (coins), which could drain the local economy of its money supply and meant that local merchants often rallied against the economic competition, especially since these companies rarely established roots but traveled from place to place taking hard currency with them. Life as a traveling performer was difficult,

requiring extensive travel for almost all performers outside London, and a constant state of unrest as troupes packed and unpacked their belongings and extensive theatre accoutrement (scenery, costumes, props, background scenery, see Figure 4.7) and traveled from venue to venue in search of audiences, whether in America or the circuit in the off season in Britain, including travel to Bath, Manchester, Leeds, or even to Dublin, Ireland.



Figure 4.7 Artistic rendering of theatre props backstage. Benjamin Henry Latrobe watercolour for his proposal *Theatre, Assembly Rooms and an hotel*, for Richmond, Virginia, c. 1797. Note the various theatre props, costumes, scenery included in Latrobes late-eighteenth-century theatre drawing. The quality and quantity of items theatre companies traveled with varied little during the eighteenth century, regardless of whether a troupe traveled within Britain, America or transatlantically taking their scenery, props and costumes with them—making for a rather expensive touring company. In collection of Library of Congress, Reproduction # L-USZC4-89, catalogue # 2001698970. <http://www.loc.gov/item/2001698970/>

Not surprisingly, we know nothing from Mrs. Hallam's point of view about her impressions of performing for Cherokee royalty discussed at length in the previous chapter, what the Williamsburg or New York theatres were like compared with London theatres, how difficult it was to leave her daughter behind to be raised by her sister-in-law, or whether performing in Philadelphia was significantly different from performing in New York, Charleston, Baltimore or Williamsburg, or whether theatre in America changed significantly between 1752 and 1773 when she retired from stage. That she brought British culture to American theatre and in doing so established a significant and tangible connection between America and Britain is certain. That she was a competent performer who managed convincingly to perform in the role of Shakespeare's

Juliet even to her son, Lewis Jr.'s Romeo is uncontested. In spite of achieving only mediocre acclaim in Britain and Ireland, Mrs. Hallam achieved a level of fame and became a celebrity on the American stage both because American audiences wished to maintain a connection with British culture and because they were looking for role models to emulate and celebrate. Mrs. Hallam brought both of these qualities to the American stage.

Although we lack a record of Mrs. Hallam's birth or marriage, a few other official documents assist in understanding her life and accomplishments as an actress: playbills listing her name and roles, newspaper announcements listing plays performed by the London Company and the American Company, her record of death in the newspapers in 1773, one drawing said to be of her (mentioned previously as being in Harvard's Theatre Collection, a portrait showing Mrs. Hallam in character dressed in Muslim costume in the role of Daraxa, a character from *Edward and Eleanora*, James Thomson's 1739 play that discussed cross-cultural bigotry), and, of course, her daughter Isabella Mattocks's comments when she was in her early fifties suggesting her familial connection to the Rich family. Other than these few documents Hallam remains mostly silenced. However, using the few documents that are available, we can piece together an impression of Mrs. Hallam's experiences as the first successful transatlantic Anglophone actress. Mrs. Hallam's London appearances seem limited to a period of seven years. The first recorded appearance of our Mrs. Hallam onstage in London was on 9 February 1745 at William Hallam's Goodman's Fields Theatre. She performed the lead female role in Susannah Centlivre's *The Busy Body* as Miranda, with her appearance noted as "being the first time of her performing on *that* Stage."<sup>29</sup> [Emphasis mine]. Most of her appearances occurred during the 1745-1746 and the 1746-1747 seasons, and took place almost exclusively at William Hallam's Goodman's Fields playhouse. Mrs. Hallam may have performed on other stages in London off-record, and she may have performed before taking on the name Mrs. Hallam, but we have no record of her name before marriage. It is likely that Mrs. Hallam appeared in the summer fair booths the Hallam family regularly operated, performances that often did not publish lists of performers by name. Lewis Hallam, Jr. was twelve when he first performed in Williamsburg, Virginia, suggesting that if Lewis Jr., was born in approximately 1740, Mrs. Hallam was likely married (or in a permanent relationship with) Lewis Sr., by 1739, exactly the same period when Ann Barrington married Sacheverel Hale.

During the 1745-1746 spring season at Goodman's Field playhouse, Mrs. Hallam's name appeared on playbills an additional five times. She performed four times on 14, 15, 16 and 18 February in the cross-dressing role of Hippolito, a man who has never before seen a woman in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, just one week after her first appearance on that stage. The following month on 7 March she performed as Mariana in an adaptation of (Jean-Baptiste Poquelin) Molière's comedy of manners, *The Miser* (1668). During the later fall season in 1745 and over the 1746-1747 season, roles for Mrs. Hallam expanded, with her appearing mostly as an ingénue and a pathetic young heroine in tragedies. She seems to have been particularly convincing in this type of role since she continued to perform in the role of Juliet in America even to her son's Romeo.

During her brief time at the Goodman's Fields playhouse, Mrs. Hallam played at least forty different roles. Some of her most memorable performances (and those which she used to great effect in America) were as Jane Shore in Nicholas Rowe's tragedy, *Jane Shore*; Monimia in Thomas Otway's tragedy *The Orphan*; Lady Townly in John Vanbrugh and Colley Cibber's comedy *The Provok'd Husband*; Elvira in John Dryden's comedy *The Spanish Fryar* (a role her daughter Isabella also played and in which she was portrayed in print in 1777); Sylvia in George Farquhar's comedy *The Recruiting Officer*; Desdemona in Shakespeare's *Othello*; Charlotte (who performs the majority of the play dressed as a man) in Thomas Southerne's tragedy *Oroonoko*; Lady Anne in Shakespeare's *Richard III*; Anne Lovely in Susanna Centlivre's comedy of manners *A Bold Stroke for a Wife*; Lavinia in Nicholas Rowe's tragedy *The Fair Penitent*; and Violante in Susanna Centlivre's comedy *The Wonder! A Woman Keeps a Secret*.

What makes this phenomenal series of performances even more impressive is that Mrs. Hallam probably gave birth to her youngest daughter, Isabella during either the 1745-1746 or 1746-1747 season, since Isabella claimed to have been six years old when her parents left for America in 1752. So, for at least several months during one of these seasons Mrs. Hallam would have appeared onstage pregnant and since performing in lead roles was extremely competitive (even in her brother-in-law, William Hallam's theatre), as long as her pregnancy did not suffer from complications. She would have also returned to the stage shortly after her daughter's birth.

Following this incredible output of performance energy, however, Mrs. Hallam almost disappears from London theatre record. This is not surprising, considering that she was now mother to four young children, the oldest of whom would have been no more than seven; the youngest of whom was a nursing infant.<sup>30</sup> However, during the next few years, Mrs. Hallam does appear on playbills for the Goodman's Field playhouse three more times before she leaves the London stage altogether. During the 1748 season, Mrs. Hallam appears at the theatre with her husband, Lewis, reprising her role of Sylvia to Lewis's Kite in Farquhar's *The Recruiting Officer*.

The following year, on 27 February 1749, Mrs. Hallam played the role of Ruth in Robert Howard's seventeenth-century comedy *The Committee*. Finally, on 5 September 1751, Mrs. Hallam made her last recorded performance at the Goodman's Field theatre and indeed in London, once again reprising her role as Desdemona in Shakespeare's *Othello*. Mrs. Hallam's last appearance in London was also a performance given for her own benefit, an honor given to the company's leading playing that would have yielded possibly as much as 50-60 £ after the theatre's deduction of production costs. William Hallam became bankrupt around this time and his theatre shut down shortly thereafter, suggesting that Mrs. Hallam's benefit night performance may have been one of the final performances given there. By the following May 1752, Mrs. Hallam had joined eleven other adult performers and three of her four children who comprised the London Company of Comedians, and set sail on the *Charming Sally* for America.<sup>31</sup>

When Mrs. Hallam departed London for America, no one in London would have called her a “celebrity.” She appeared at her brother-in-law’s unlicensed theatre, but with the exception of two very busy seasons, she seems not to have made much of an impression on the London stage. However, all of that changed when she sailed across the Atlantic to America. When she arrived in 1752, Mrs. Hallam was one of three married women in the company and one of five actresses who performed with the London Company (including her daughter) during their initial season in Williamsburg, Virginia. Instead of being simply a decent actress at a second-rate London theatre, she became America’s first professional celebrity actress. She was consistently cast in lead roles, received public acknowledgement in local papers for her performances and quite possibly helped convince American audiences of the legitimacy (and moral decency) of theatre more generally. Her influence on American certainly should not be overlooked and will, in the following section, suggest just how well she played her part in the legitimization and establishment of professional theatre in eighteenth-century America. In 1752, the fifteen performers in the London Company of Comedians took with them a collection of twenty-four plays, several after-pieces in the form of farces and medleys, along with extensive (and costly) scenery, props and costumes. During their four-week transatlantic voyage, that included a brief stop in Barbados, the actors rehearsed their plays onboard ship so that they would be prepared to stage performances as soon as they received a license when they arrived in Virginia. However, it took several weeks of pandering and much cajoling to convince Virginia Governor Robert Dinwiddie that they were professionals and made of greater moral character than the recently-departed Murray-Kean Company. By September 1752, Mrs. Hallam and the London Company of Comedians were set up in their own theatre in Williamsburg, and they gave their first performance on 15 September, staging Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*, with Mrs. Hallam playing in the lead female role, Portia. During their brief time in Williamsburg, the London Company gave performances to Virginia’s social elite, Cherokee leaders and to anyone else

willing and able to spend 7 shillings, 6 pence for boxes; 5 shillings, 9 pence for pit and balconies; and 3 shillings, 9 pence for seats in the gallery.<sup>32</sup>

### Acting in America: Portia and Desdemona

Mrs. Hallam, the matriarch of early American theatre, appeared for the first time onstage in America on 15 September 1752, in the role of Portia (a role that also involved cross-dressing) in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* in Williamsburg, Virginia.<sup>33</sup> This role may have been new to her, as she is not listed as having performed it previously on the London stage.<sup>34</sup> In general, Shakespeare's plays regularly appeared on British (and subsequently American) stages during the eighteenth century after the passage of the Theatre Licensing Act of 1737, with tragedies (like *Othello*) and dramas (like *Merchant of Venice*) being particularly popular, especially in America. Portia thus became an important stock role popular with actresses during the eighteenth-century.<sup>35</sup>

On 28 August 1752 in the *Virginia Gazette*, the London Company of Comedians announced its debut

performance (See Fig. 4.8) and according to the 22 September 1752 *Virginia Gazette*, the theatre

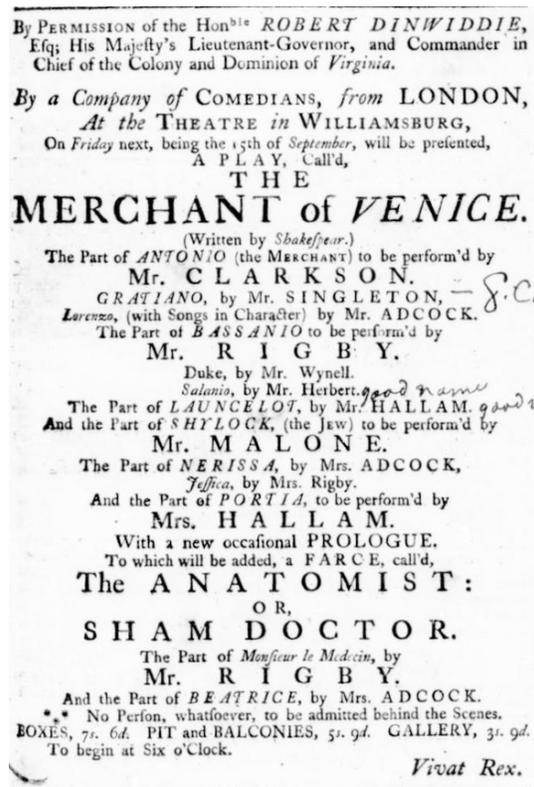


Figure 4.8 Advertisement in *The Virginia Gazette*, 28 August 1752 for the first performance of the London Company of Comedians in Williamsburg, Virginia. Note that Mrs. Hallam, who performed for the company as lead actress, has her name listed prominently in the same size font as lead actors' names. Actresses and actors in supporting roles have their names less prominently printed.

was well attended; “On Friday last the Company of Comedians from England opened the Theatre in this City, when *The Merchant of Venice*, and the *Anatomist*, were perform’d, before a numerous and polite Audience, with great Applause,” which was followed by a printed version of the Prologue given by Mr. Rigby that night.<sup>36</sup> Unfortunately, other than the brief newspaper article summarizing the audience’s response that night as polite and generous with their applause little is known about who comprised the audience or what they might have thought individually about Mrs. Hallam’s performance. In the absence of evidence then, we will look at the importance of the role of Portia as the first role performed by a professional Anglophone actress in America.

As a play, *The Merchant of Venice* is controversial. The play is rife with cross-dressing roles, and includes women who save the day both dressed as women (using their beauty) and dressed as men (using their brains). In addition, *The Merchant of Venice* is also a racially charged play and presents contemporary anti-Semitic sentiments onstage by portraying the Jew, Shylock, as a bloodthirsty moneylender.<sup>37</sup> Considering the numerous strong themes associated with this particular Shakespearean play, it seems an interesting (yet memorable) performance to stage and an unforgettable role with which Mrs. Hallam to begin her American career.

Portia initially appears onstage in the first act bemoaning her existence (to which Nerissa responds that she has fewer miseries than misfortunes, and thus has no reason to whine). Portia then complains that her father will not allow her to choose her own husband. Nerissa then asks Portia her opinion on several suitors, each of whom Portia derides as unworthy, “I will do any / thing, Nerissa, ere I’ll be married to a sponge.”<sup>38</sup> In spite of her protestations, however, ultimately Portia falls in love with Bassanio, who had enlisted Antonio to borrow money from the Jewish moneylender, Shylock, so that Bassanio might have (ironically) the means to woo Portia. So, Antonio’s selfless act of borrowing money allows his friend Bassanio to impress and then marry Portia. In the meantime, not all is well with Antonio, whose means of repaying Shylock’s

loan is locked in a fleet of ships that sink before he is able to repay the moneylender. Shylock demands repayment of the debt, if not in cash, then in a pound of Antonio's flesh.

Portia, a wealthy heiress with means at her disposal, sends Bassanio ahead with money to save Antonio and just in case something goes awry (and equally prepared to face any challenge), she travels with her lady-in-waiting, Nerissa, to see justice carried out. Portia appears in court "like a doctor of laws" with Nerissa as his/her clerk. Their disguises are so convincing (or the men so near-sighted) that even Bassanio does not recognize his new wife. Portia confronts Shylock in court and demands mercy, eloquently claiming "The quality of mercy is not strain'd, / It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven / Upon the place beneath: it is twice blest; / It blesseth him that gives and him that takes."<sup>39</sup> Portia argues Shylock out of his money saves the day. It is her money that helps save Antonio from Shylock's knife; it is also Portia's cleverness and quick thinking that give Shylock no choice but to concede, losing both his reputation and his money.

The strength of Portia's character exists on many levels, which is why it makes her one of the most interesting roles for an actress to play. Portia asserts her will to choose her own

partner. She uses her wealth and wits to secure the safety of her husband's friend. According to the letter of the law, Shylock is right in asserting his claim for Antonio's flesh since he possesses a signed contract. So

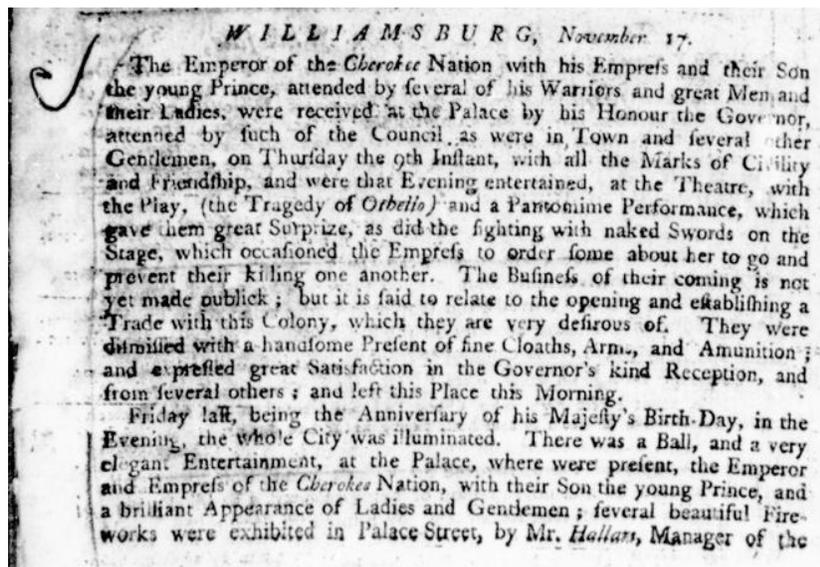


Figure 4.9 Announcement of *Othello* given 9 November 1752 for the Cherokee Emperor, his wife and entourage as well as for the Williamsburg social elite. See *The Virginia Gazette* 17 November 1752.

while Portia's money allows her access to Antonio and the ability to pay off his debt to Shylock, her ultimate success occurs when she acts as a "doctor of laws," demands mercy, and uses Shylock's greed against him so that he receives nothing but public shame and empty pockets.

Mrs. Hallam would have made a strong first impression in the role of Portia, a strong female character who crossed gender boundaries both as a willful, independent woman and as a woman unafraid (literally and figuratively) to take on a male persona. Her appearance and manners were striking and theatre critic Joseph Norton Ireland (1817-1898) described Mrs. Hallam as "a woman of great beauty and elegance, still in the prime of life and enabled to play the youthful heroines of tragedy and comedy with due effect."<sup>40</sup> American audiences may have found the appearance of such a strong female character surprising, or possibly even refreshing. It seems likely, though, that Portia's independent spirit and clever manner of thinking herself out of a situation would have appealed to their first Williamsburg audience—as would her borrowed position as a lawyer since a number of audience members, such as member of the House of Burgesses Peyton Randolph, who represented the Colony of Virginia as well as clients George Washington, William Byrd III, and Landon Carter were practicing lawyers in the Capital of the Colony.<sup>41</sup>

Yet in spite of initial positive reviews, American audiences were likely less socially forward thinking than London audiences in 1752, and the environment into which Mrs. Hallam (whom theatre historian William Dunlap called "the first actress in the country") found herself, was not exactly supportive of "public" women, at least not locally.<sup>42</sup> Evidence in local newspapers suggests that women who stepped outside of acceptable social boundaries should be punished. Of the six local court cases announced in the 12 June edition of the *Virginia Gazette* (one for murder, two for rape, three for felonies), the two rape case defendants were acquitted, one by the Grand Jury, one by the Petit Jury (the second defendant in this case being "bound to good behavior for seven years").<sup>43</sup> Other women saw their names (and shames) publicly

announced. For example, James Murphy took out an extensive advertisement announcing that he would not pay any debts made by his wife, Anne, who “hath in a Clandestine manner, left his Plantation.”<sup>44</sup> A significant advertisement on the fourth page of the newspaper requested assistance in locating a “lusty well-looking Servant Woman, named Mary Hunt, alias Williams” who “’tis supposed she will change her Name, and put on Man’s Apparel.”<sup>45</sup>

Mrs. Hallam followed her performance of Portia six weeks later on 9 November 1752, with a performance as Desdemona, a role she had played in her last known appearance in London (See Fig. 4.9). As previously discussed in Chapter Three, Mrs. Hallam’s performance was so moving and realistic—the entire cast’s performance was so realistic and believable in fact—that the Cherokee Empress ordered some of her warriors to stop the violence onstage. Desdemona was in fact, among the earliest legitimate roles any Anglophone actress performed on the London stage.<sup>46</sup> Linking the role of Desdemona with moral superiority was translated almost a century later on the American stage when Mrs. Hallam performed the role in Williamsburg, Virginia, for the Cherokee entourage.<sup>47</sup> As one of the first roles (if not the first role) performed by the a “professional” actress on the London stage, Desdemona was also one of the first roles performed by the first professional actress on the American stage almost one hundred years later.

Certainly theatre in America was still forming its identity in 1752. Even two years later in 1758, the London Company of Comedians continued to struggle for social acceptance.<sup>48</sup> On the opening night of the 1758 season in New York at their new theatre at Cruger’s Wharf, Mrs. Hallam addressed her audience to accept her/their calling as thespians. Mrs. Hallam cautioned her audience, “Much has been said at this unlucky time, / To prove the treading of the stage a crime. / Mistaken zeal, in tears oft not so civil, / Consigns both plays and players to the devil. Yet wise men own, a play well chose may teach / Such useful moral truths as the parsons preach;” and even more tellingly, “When Cato bleeds he spends his latest breath, / To teach the love of country

strong in death.”<sup>49</sup> Even though opposition to theatre continued in America, moments like this one confirm the importance of women serving as cultural diplomats in ensuring theatre’s survival.

Eighteenth-century Anglophone theatre also served as a form of cultural translation. It was frequently attended by audience members for whom English was not their native tongue (those who spoke French, Dutch, or Cherokee, for example). It therefore facilitated an important cultural transfer of ideas including gender roles, fashion, political attitudes and social changes to Anglo and non-Anglo audiences. Performing for Native American royalty, such as the Cherokee “Emperor” Amouskositte and his “Empress,” must have been both exciting and anxiety-provoking for Mrs. Hallam when she took the stage as Desdemona, especially since she did not know how her unique audience might react. At this particular moment, Mrs. Hallam rose above any fears she might have had and gave the performance of a lifetime. From that moment on she solidified her position as an actress of note and began to carve the path for actresses to become America’s first celebrities.

### **Mrs. Hallam/Douglass’s Celebrity Status and Influence on American Theatre**

On 14 October 1773, the *Virginia Gazette* wedged a small announcement on its front page in the right-hand column between the description of a treasury robbery at Amboy, New Jersey, and the unfortunate death of “Graham the Constable” in New York who before had “many Hairbreath escapes of His Life” was a brief announcement of the death of Mrs. Douglass, formerly Mrs. Hallam, in Philadelphia:

New York, September 23.

Last Week died, at Philadelphia, Mrs. Douglass, Wife of Mr. Douglas, Manager of the American Company of Comedians, Mother of Mr. Lewis Hallam, and of Mrs. Mattocks of Covent Garden Theatre, and Aunt of Miss Hallam; a Lady who by her excellent Performances upon the Stage, and her irreproachable Manners in private Life, had recommended herself to the Friendship and Affection of many of the principal Families on the Continent and in the West Indies.<sup>50</sup>

Her death announcement placed her in her most socially acceptable roles as wife, mother, and aunt, selflessly caring for others. The announcement identified her first as wife of theatre manager David Douglass, then as the mother of Lewis Hallam and Mrs. Mattocks, both successful and recognized actors, and also as aunt of the unidentified but assumed to be popular American actress, Nancy Hallam. Even in death Mrs. Hallam's identity was not her own and was associated with the accomplishments of others rather than her own. However, following the interruption by a semi-colon of that one long, seventy-five-word sentence announcing her death, Mrs. Hallam is lauded with brief but significant accolades for her "excellent Performances upon the Stage" before she is again admired for her "irreproachable Manners in private Life" that earned her "Friendship and Affection of many of the principal Families" in America and the British Caribbean.

One of the clear differences between the celebrity status of London actresses achieved by Isabella Hallam Mattocks and to some degree Ann Hallam Hale Barrington, and the type of recognition or "celebrity-ness" Mrs. Hallam/Douglass achieved performing in America rests in the fact that performers in America aimed to be acceptable not exceptional. In spite of what seems to be a snub to her three-decades-long career on transatlantic Anglophone stages, this concise death announcement speaks volumes as to Mrs. Hallam's worth as America's first professional stage actress. American actresses did not dress in costumes donated by duchesses or wealthy merchants but instead wore clothes that they could afford (often sewing these costumes themselves) on their theatre salaries. American actresses also avoided gossip that London actresses seemed to crave in order to be accepted within the small colonial communities since their reputation as morally upright rather than theatrical licentious allowed them to obtain subsequent permission to perform in various locations. Because of the tenuous hold theatre had in America before the American Revolution, performers also needed to assure circumspect audience members that their craft was legitimate, that their plays were informative and enlightening, and

that they were relatable characters onstage and off. It was, in fact, the absolute *unexceptional* quality of these early American actresses, I would argue, rather than their extreme beauty, gossip-worthy offstage antics, or charismatic personae that allowed the first professional American actresses like Mrs. Hallam/Douglass, and subsequently, her niece Nancy Hallam, to become successful stage performers in America. The relatability of actresses like Mrs. Hallam/Douglass and her niece, Nancy Hallam, whose career onstage lasted a dozen years and ended just prior to the American Revolution, brought Anglophone theatre closer to their audiences. Their normalcy as individuals in not standing out legitimized these early actresses in the wary eyes of American audiences who both doubted theatre's moral legitimacy as proper entertainment and worried about Britain's cultural influence becoming overly domineering.

While neither Mrs. Hallam/Douglass nor Nancy Hallam ever achieved the level of fame that Isabella Hallam Mattocks would ultimately achieve with her almost five-decade-long career performing in lead roles with the Covent Garden Theatre, what they did achieve as performers in America was remarkable. They helped make Anglophone theatre in America legitimate, provided important moments of cultural diplomacy between Anglo cultures and Native cultures within the transatlantic Anglophone world, and established a permanent cultural connection between America and Britain that American audiences returned to in the years following the American Revolution.

### **Isabella Hallam Mattocks**



Figure 4.10 Portrait of Isabella Mattocks speaking the epilogue of *Know Your Own Mind*, 1780, Engraving, etching. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Rare Book and Manuscript Collection.

Isabella Mattocks (1746-1826) was born Isabella Hallam on 25 May 1746 at 3 Lambert (or Lambeth) Street, Whitechapel, London. She was baptized at St. Mary's, Whitechapel, London (See Figures 4.10 and 4.11). The location of her birth and baptism in London's poorer Whitechapel neighborhood suggests that Isabella's family was not wealthy and that they wished to live in close proximity to the theatres in which they worked. Isabella was the youngest known child of actors Lewis and Mrs. Hallam, and the niece of actress Ann Barrington. The year before she was born, Isabella's parents had joined her uncle's, William Hallam (c. 1712-1758) acting company at the New Wells Theatre in Goodman's Fields, located at Lemon (or

Leman) Street, London.<sup>51</sup> Isabella's mother, Mrs. Hallam, is on record as performing during at her brother-in-law's theatre during the 1745-1746, season suggesting that she was pregnant with Isabella while performing.<sup>52</sup>

In an effort to start a new theatre company, Isabella's parents travelled to America in 1752 when she was six years old. Touring as performers was nothing new. Most actors spent the summer months on tour outside the Patent theatres, finding employment at fairs in market towns in England and Ireland, often performing in Bristol, Canterbury, Ipswich, Liverpool, Dublin, Bath

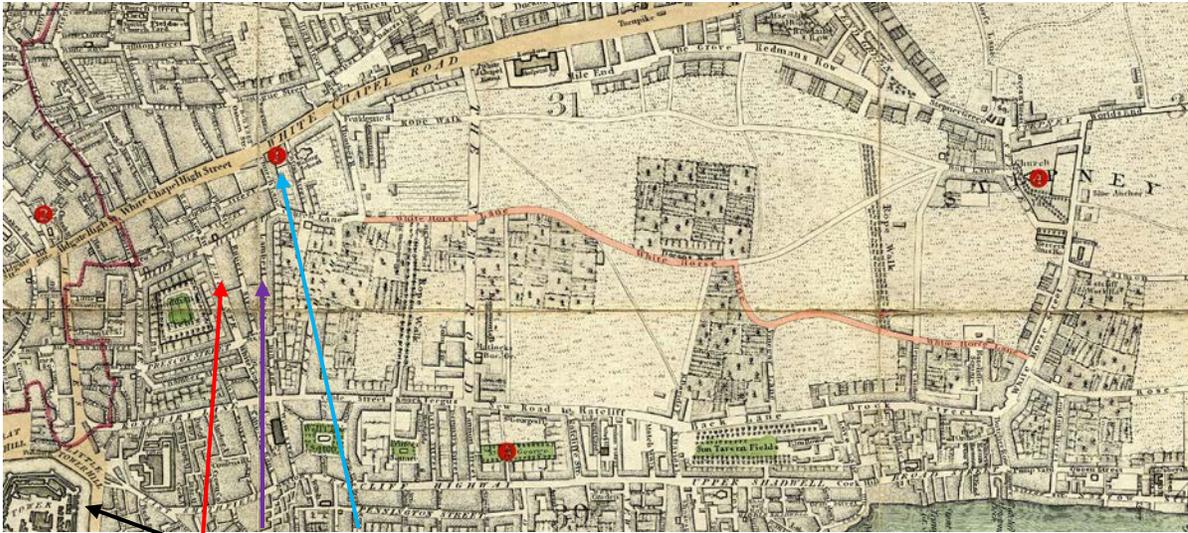


Figure 4.11 Map detail of Whitechapel, London taken from John Cary's "New Intenary's Environs of London" published in 1795. William Hallam's New Wells Theatre, also known as the Theatre at Goodman's Fields at Lemon (or Leman) Street is highlighted by the red arrow on the far left and would have been where Mrs. Hallam was performing when she was pregnant with Isabella in 1746. Whitechapel was not a wealthy district and during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century came to be known as the site of Jack the Ripper murders of prostitutes. Lambert Street, where Isabella was born, is highlighted by the purple arrow and St Mary's Chapel, where she was baptized, is highlighted by the blue arrow. The Tower of London is highlighted by the black arrow in the lower left corner. The patent theatres Drury Lane, Covent Garden, and Haymarket were 2.8 miles to the west of Hallam's New Wells Theatre at Goodman's Fields, a significant distance separating the legitimate theatres from Hallam's unlicensed theatre at that time. Audiences attending Hallam's theatre were comprised of a more mixed social background.

or York. Some actors used this time to try out new roles; others used this time to perfect their technique.<sup>53</sup> Although acting families often stayed together it was not always possible either economically or physically. The Hallams took three of their four children with them. Lewis Jr., was twelve in 1752 and was removed from school in Cambridge to join his family, Adam was ten and stayed with the company until about 1760, Helen was younger, possibly eight at the time the family sailed for America. She stayed with the company from 1752-1754 before returning to England. Eighteenth-century acting families often traveled together, so it is no surprise that

Isabella's parents eventually chose to take their act on the road, or in their case overseas. Why Isabella was left behind is not known. No particular evidence exists suggests that young Isabella Hallam was sickly or weak. Her recollections of her early life suggest that she was an active, healthy child and that her aunt and uncle were kind parents. Ann Barrington was already a well-established London actress when she became Isabella's guardian and theatrical tutor. From this time forward, Ann Barrington acted as Isabella's surrogate mother. In her later life Isabella made no mention of seeing her mother again. Likewise, Lewis Hallam, Jr., makes no mention of his sister, Isabella, in any correspondences, and, as previously mentioned, Mrs. Hallam left no letters behind addressed to or from her daughter. Once the decision had been made to leave Isabella with Lewis Hallam's sister, Ann, it appears they left all connection with her behind. It appears the Hallams wanted to keep the family together, suggesting that the opportunity to train with Ann and John Barrington, both highly regarded and talented performers, superseded Mrs. Hallam's desire to keep the family intact. Indeed, young Isabella first performed in London three months after her family left for America and within a decade, she rose to become one of London's premier actresses and was regularly cast in leading roles at Covent Garden and Drury Lane.

Through her aunt's careful training, Isabella obtained the skills and the work ethic to succeed onstage in London at a time when competition for gaining lead roles as an actress was strong. It did not hurt that Isabella was part of an extended acting family with uncles, aunts, cousins, grandparents and siblings all involved with the theatre from as early as 1707. It appears that once Mrs. Hallam made the decision to leave Isabella in the care of her sister-in-law, Ann Barrington, she never saw her daughter again. Isabella never went to America to tour with her family and Mrs. Hallam never returned to England. Isabella was raised alongside her cousin, Mary Anne, Ann's daughter by her first marriage with Sacherverel Hale, and though Isabella succeeded onstage with memorable brilliance, her cousin's performances were far less noteworthy.<sup>54</sup>

Isabella's first appearance was in late September 1752 at the Theatre Royal Covent Garden as the Young Duke of York in Shakespeare's *Richard III* (c. 1592), the same role that her aunt Ann Barrington first played when she took the stage in 1733. This role was one that she would repeat again on 18 May 1753 and twice more during the next season as she trained to perform for the public. Isabella was joined onstage during her first performances by her Aunt Ann Barrington who appeared as Lady Anne, Richard's wife, likely helping to alleviate any sense of stage fright the young girl might have felt. Performing as a boy might have been empowering for young Isabella, and it might have been terrifying.<sup>55</sup> In 1762, at age sixteen, Isabella made her first adult appearance with the Covent Garden Theatre in the role of Juliet in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and from there her stardom rose higher. Her portrait was painted and then transformed into etchings and prints that were more affordable for the consumer. (See Figure 4.10) By 1765, she had married the actor George Mattocks, who often appeared as her leading man, though the union was not supported by her adoptive parents, the Barringtons. She most likely had an affair with another actor of little consequence, Robert Bensley (c. 1740-1817), who joined the Covent Garden Theatre from 1766-1775 before he returned to the Drury Lane Theatre. By the time she was twenty, Isabella Hallam Mattocks became one of the most recognized and celebrated actresses of her day. After she died, one critic wrote of Isabella and her accomplishments as an actress,

She became, notwithstanding this 'in some peoples' opinion unpromising symptom), a great favourite with the public, both in comedy and opera; and her manner of delivering an epilogue was universally admired as being truly graceful and impressive. To sum up the whole it may be sufficient to say, that she was afterward the celebrated MRS. MATTOCKS, of Covent Garden theatre, and the delight of a London audience, generally said to be the most critical one in the world. I have been credibly informed, that their late Majesties were so much pleased with MRS. MATTOCKS, and so well convinced of her great merit, as to settle on her a pension of 200L per annum, at the time of her retirement from the stage, which was on the 7<sup>th</sup> of June, 1808, after a theatrical life of nearly sixty years.<sup>56</sup>

During the course of her career, Isabella achieved everything one would expect of a celebrity. Her portrait was painted. She had public adoration of the London audience (“the most critical one in the world”) as a comic actress and as an opera singer. Even after she died her name given priority over other members of her family, unlike her own mother. Moreover, when she finished acting, Isabella received the admiration of British royalty who provided her with a comfortable retirement after her nearly sixty-year career on the London stage.

### Isabella’s Training and Life with the Barrington’s

Following her debut performance speaking sixteen lines in her first scene as the Young Duke of York on September 1752 at the Covent Garden Theatre,<sup>57</sup> Isabella was next announced as “Miss Hallam” in the role of “Parish Girl” on 2 October 1752 in John Gay’s *What d’ye call it* (1715) at London’s Theatre Royal Covent Garden. In the audience that night was a particularly important



Figure 4.12 Lavinia Fenton, Duchess of Bolton as as Polly Peachum in John Gay’s, *The Beggar’s Opera*. Portrait by Charles Jervas, c. 1730s.

celebrity, the Duchess of Bolton, Lavinia Powlett (1708-1760), often known by her stage name Lavinia Fenton (See Fig. 4.12). The Duchess had at one time been one of the most celebrated and beautiful comedic actresses in London, and had infamously been known to have started as a Charring Cross child prostitute. In one of her earliest roles, Fenton had first made a name for herself as the famous “Polly Peachum” in another of John Gay’s plays, the wildly popular (and

highly political) ballad opera, *The Beggar's Opera* (1728). She had recently married almost immediately after the death of his wife, her lover of almost thirty years and father of their three sons, Charles Powlett, 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Bolton, a man situated well above her station.

Like Isabella's career, Fenton's professional career began with the role of Parish Girl in Gay's opera. So it is not surprising that during Isabella's performance on that October evening, the Duchess was "so charmed with the infant actress" that she "sent her five guineas, accompanied with a polite card, expressing her approbation and intimating a wish that the little Parish Girl of that evening might be as successful through life as she had been."<sup>58</sup> Her note and expressions of hopes for success to Isabella also suggest that Fenton clearly recognized in the young child a star's talent; accordingly, her words to Isabella were heartfelt and prophetic. The experience was memorable to Isabella who almost fifty years later wrote to J. Hill Esq. [of] Henrietta St. Covent Garden in 1800, "I was so little that a gentleman whimsically said 'he could hear me very well, but he cou'd not see me without a glass.'"<sup>59</sup>

But Isabella's success was not all because of her innate talent. Ann Barrington chose her niece's roles judiciously. She continued to cultivate Isabella as a performer, making sure to give the girl only two or three roles each season and allowing her to remain in the theatre so that she could absorb the performances of her elders. Isabella's talent was carefully honed, carefully watched, and many of the roles Isabella took on were the same roles—many of them breeches parts—that Ann Barrington had performed as a young girl: the young Duke of York in Shakespeare's *Richard III*, Page in Thomas Otway's *The Orphan*, Parish Girl in John Gay's *What d'ye call it*. On 27 October 1752, Isabella performed the role of "Page" in Thomas Otway's domestic tragedy, *The Orphan; or, The Unhappy Marriage* (1680).<sup>60</sup> Performing in Otway's play ensured that Isabella would be seen by a large audience alongside some of London's finest actors. Isabella's continued success, even in these small roles, contributed toward the room and board her aunt and uncle paid to take care of her. While a child's salary in the theatre was inconsequential,

it provided some level of support, gave the child training toward a viable occupation, and introduced her to the acting community.

Isabella performed with the Barringtons at the Covent Garden Theatre in London during the 1752-1753 season, and in Bristol and Kent in 1754 before returning to the Covent Garden Theatre for the 1755-1756 season, where her name appeared eight times in theatre playbills in these three previously mentioned roles. During the 1756-1757 season at the Covent Garden Theatre, Isabella performed again as the young Duke of York, Page and Parish Girl, adding the role of Page in Aphra Behn's *The Rover*. The next year, Isabella's repertoire added yet another Page in Colley Cibber's *Love Makes a Man*, and Robin in Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

Following this season, the Barringtons and Isabella decamped for Bristol, where they spent the next two years performing at Bristol's Jacob's Well Theatre, which could hold an impressive 1600 persons (750 in boxes, 320 in the Pit and 530 in the gallery). Receipts for one night's performance, if all seats were filled could amount to 229 £. 15s. (150 £ for box seat receipts, 40 £ for Pit receipts and 39 £ 15s. for gallery receipts).<sup>61</sup> John Barrington "played the low Irish characters."<sup>62</sup> Ann Barrington's name appeared on playbills at Jacob's Wells Theatre on an 8 August 1760 playbill announcing the performance for her benefit, and Isabella made her debut on the Jacob's Well stage "By particular desire, Singing and Playing on the Guitar, by Miss Hallam—End of Act III the Song 'My Banks they were furnished with Bees.' End of Act IV the Song 'A dawn of Hope my Soul revives.'"<sup>63</sup> Her first performance in Bristol was reported not to have come off without a hitch; "her extreme diffidence and timidity would scarcely admit of her getting through the task." By 1765, however, at age nineteen, Isabella appears to have mastered her timidity and began appearing in lead roles at London's Covent Garden Theatre.

## The Celebrated Actress

Isabella quickly gained a reputation as a bright young talent in London as an actress, dancer, and musical instrument performer. Writing in 1795, Joseph Hasselwood commented, “Had Mrs. Mattocks been educated a Nun, it would require no great depth of penetration to know she was born an Actress.”<sup>64</sup> Isabella’s early training as a “utility” actress allowed her to perform in smaller roles like the Page in *The Orphan* on 10 December 1754, Page in Aphra Behn’s *The Rover* on 1 November 1757, Robin in Shakespeare’s *Merry Wives of Windsor* on 22 April 1757 and Boy in Shakespeare’s *Henry V* on 5 November 1757 while she developed her “type.”<sup>65</sup> On 10 April 1761, at age fifteen, Isabella played Juliet to her aunt’s Lady Capulet for her aunt’s benefit night and was announced as being “a young gentlewoman, being her first appearance (as a woman)” on the Covent Garden stage. This moment marked the beginning of Isabella’s ascendancy to becoming one of London’s most popular actresses.<sup>66</sup> Between 1752 and 1765, when she married her leading man from the Covent Garden Theatre, George Mattocks, Isabella performed ninety-five times at London’s Covent Garden Theatre, including a period of two years 1760-1761, that she did not appear at the Covent Garden Theatre.

Beginning in 1762, Isabella began to perform in original roles, a significant step up for a young performer and further proof that her talent as an actress was recognized by playwrights looking to benefit from her popularity. Joseph Hasselwood complimented “the delicacy of her person, the vivacity of her temper, with a distinguishing judgment, all shewed themselves to advantage in this walk, and she was in a short time considered by the town [of London] as a very universal and useful Performer.”<sup>67</sup> Giving original roles to new performers was risky for playwrights and performers since non-proven pieces were potential financial disasters if they could not last through at least to the third night of an initial run, the third night being the playwright’s benefit night. After 1690 a playwright might receive additional benefits on the sixth night of a play’s initial run—a feat not common with most eighteenth century plays—and once

these two nights were over, a playwright received no more from the company, even if the play remained actively in the repertory. Additional income might come to a playwright only if he or she chose to copyright a play.

On 8 December 1762, Isabella played the original Lucinda in Isaac Bickerstaff's *Love in a Village*, appeared as the original Nancy in Arthur Murphy's *What We Must All Come to* on 9 December 1763, performed the original Lady Julia in Thomas Arne's *Guardian Outwitted*, on 29 October 1764, performed the original Jenny in Bickerstaff's new comic opera *Lionel and Clarissa*, and acted the original Theodosia in Isaac Bickerstaff's *Maid of the Mill* on 12 December 1764. During the 1768-1769 season Isabella Mattocks added to her original roles performing the original Honour in Joseph Reed's new comic opera *Tom Jones*, and during the 1769-1770 season Isabella performed the original Lettice in Colman's new comedy *Man and Wife*.<sup>68</sup> Until 1762, Isabella had performed only a handful of times each year, but beginning in 1762, Isabella performed as a constant presence with twelve performances given in 1762, twenty-four performances in 1763, twenty-six appearances onstage in 1764 and thirty seven performances in 1765, eleven of those performances were given as Isabella Hallam and twenty-six performances as Isabella Mattocks.<sup>69</sup> All of these London performances were at the Covent Garden Theatre.

On 24 April 1765, in spite of being only nineteen years old, the newly married Isabella, performing now as Mrs. Mattocks, received her own benefit night, cementing her position as one of the company's most important performers. She performed the role of the Lady in Dalton's *Comus* and Sophy in George Colman's *Musical Lady*, a new play at the Covent Garden Theatre.<sup>70</sup> Thomas Betterton began the practice of offering an incentive of benefit nights to his performers in 1695 and benefit nights, as previously mentioned, were particularly important to performers. Important performers in a company received their own benefit nights and lesser performers within a company shared the proceeds of a benefit night, so the fact that Isabella performed as

Juliet for her aunt's benefit night at age fifteen in 1761 and that she received her (sole) own benefit night at age nineteen in 1765 are significant indicators of her popularity and skill as a London actress at such a young age. A well-attended benefit night might yield a performer an entire year's salary within a single evening, not to mention audience members often gifted performers with jewels or money, small token of their admiration. In order to increase potential revenue, theatre's added box seating to areas in the Pit and, until the last decades of the eighteenth century in London, provided additional seating onstage.

Between 1765 and 1776, when she was between ages nineteen through thirty, Isabella appeared onstage in London an additional 440 times, representing the height of her London stage career. These were also the years that her Aunt Ann Barrington was at her least productive as a performer, giving only twenty-eight performances between 1765 and 1772. In 1772, the last year that Ann Barrington appeared onstage with three performances at the Covent Garden Theatre, Isabella gave forty-five performances at the Covent Garden Theatre and one performance at the Drury Lane Theatre. While all but eighteen of Isabella's recorded London performances were given at the Covent Garden Theatre, Isabella also appeared onstage nine times at the Drury Lane Theatre, four times at the Haymarket Theatre, once at the Chapel Theatre and once at the Strand. She also appeared onstage outside of London, for example appearing during the summer of 1773 at the Liverpool Theatre as Statira in *The Rival Queens*, Monimia in *The Orphan*, Queen Mary in *The Albion Queens*, Octavia in *All for Love*, Portia in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, Constance in Shakespeare's *King John*, reprised her role as Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*, and performed Lady Macbeth in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.<sup>71</sup>

Isabella gave an astounding 935 performances in London theatres between 1766 and 1800 (including the year 1785 when she did not appear onstage in London), making 1030 the total of Isabella's recorded performances in London between 1752 and 1800. In comparison, one of London's other celebrity actresses admired as much for her performances as for her sense of

fashion, Frances Abington (1737-1815), performed in 487 recorded roles in London—first as Frances Barton (1755-1759) and then afterwards as Frances Abington (1759-1799).<sup>72</sup> Having fewer roles than Isabella Mattocks might be explained by the simple fact that most of Abington’s earlier performances were at the Drury Lane Theatre where Catherine “Kitty” Raftor Clive (1711-1785) and Hannah Pritchard (1711-1785) were the more popular actresses. Clive, arguably one of London’s most popular and celebrated actresses of her time, left behind a brilliant acting career with an astonishing 1185 recorded performances in London between 1732 and 1782, exceeding even Isabella’s recorded number of performances and rivaling the length of her acting career.<sup>73</sup> Theatre darling Hannah Pritchard, whose career almost paralleled Ann Barrington’s, and who often played opposite London’s most renowned actor David Garrick at the Drury Lane Theatre, recorded 1080 performances in London between 1733 and 1768.<sup>74</sup>

Another popular comic actress appearing in London at the same time as Isabella was Irish actress Elizabeth Farren (1759-1829). Farren, during her twenty-year career onstage recorded giving 495 performances between 1777 and 1797 before retiring upon her marriage (much above her station as the daughter of an apothecary and actor) to Edward Smith-Stanley, 12<sup>th</sup> Earl of Derby.<sup>75</sup> Comparing Isabella’s career onstage with these four other highly recognized celebrity London actresses also suggests Isabella performed competitively and successfully alongside London’s greatest actresses of the period, managed to maintain a decades-long career performing in one of London’s licensed theatres, continued to appear in original roles, and rivaled the period’s most popular actresses with the total number of performances she gave in London during her career. While her name might not be as recognized as these other four actresses, her accomplishments and steady employment suggest that playwrights and audiences admired and celebrated her performances.

Between 1779 and 1800 Isabella performed in twenty-four recorded original roles. She performed Adelaide in Charles Dibdin’s comic opera *The Shepherdess of the Alps* in 1779-1780,

Mrs. Sparwell in Hannah Cowley's comedy *The World as it Goes* in 1780-1781, Amelia in Leonard Macnally's farce *Retaliation* in 1781-1782, Olivia in Hannah Cowley's comedy *A Bold Stroke for a Husband* in 1782-1783. During the 1785 season, Isabella Mattocks and her husband moved to Liverpool where he became theatre manager through summer 1786. Isabella left her husband in Liverpool in the summer of 1786 when she regained her position at the Covent Garden Theatre, at the salary of 10 £ a week. In 1790-1791 she played the original Lady Peckham in Thomas Holcroft's comedy *The School for Arrogance*, and the original Mrs. Cockletop in John O'Keefe's farce *Modern Antiquities*. During the 1791-1792 season she performed as the original Lauretta in Hannah Cowley comic opera *A Day in Turkey*, Mrs. Warren in Thomas Holcroft's comedy *The Road to Ruin* and during the 1793-1794 season she performed as the original Nannette in Thomas Holcroft's comedy *Love's Frailties*, the original Lady Philippa Sidney in Henry Bate's comic opera *The Travellers in Switzerland*. During the 1794-1795 season she continued to perform in original roles as Lady Savage in Frederick Reynold's comedy *The Rage!*, Mrs Fancourt in Hannah Cowley's *The Town Before You*, Annette in John Blake White's melodrama (a genre just then becoming popular) *The Mysteries of the Castle*, Mrs. Bloomfield in William Macready's *The Bank Note*, and Mrs. Sarsnet in Thomas Holcroft's comedy *The Deserted Daughter*.<sup>76</sup> Until the late 1790s, Isabella continued to perform during the summer season in Liverpool and appeared onstage in Edinburgh during the summer of 1798. She supplemented her Covent Garden salary (which remained at 10 £ a week for her final years there) with one-night engagements on the provincial circuit and in provincial town performances during the summers.

At age fifty during the 1795-1796, season Isabella seemed determined to continue performing in original roles and added the following roles to her repertoire: Mrs. Auburn in John O’Keefe’s farce *The Doldrum*, Clementina Allspice in Thomas Morton’s comedy *The Way to Get Married*. During the 1796-1797 season, she added the original roles of Miss Union in Reynold’s comedy *Fortune’s Fool*, Miss Vortex in Morton’s comedy *A Cure for the Heartache*, Lady Mary Raffle in Elizabeth Inchbald’s comedy *Wives As They Were and Maids As They Are*, and as the original Lady Nettleton in Benjamin Hoadley’s comedy *The Tatlers*. During the 1797-1798 season, Isabella added to her list of original roles performing the original Sally Downright in Morton’s comedy *He’s Much to Blame*, Lady Maxim in T. J. Dibdin’s comedy *Five Thousand a Year*, and during the 1799-1800 season she performed as the original Rachel Starch in Elizabeth Inchbald’s *The Wise Man of the East*.

Though she performed less frequently during her last eight years onstage, between 1800 and 1808 Isabella (aged 54 to 62), still managed to appear in thirteen roles new to



Figure 4.13 Isabella Mattocks, 1780. Isabella is dressed in high fashion of the time with turban, high dressed hair and, announcing her profession as an actress, she is dressed with a suggestively low-cut dress that exposes her right breast.

her repertoire. Eight of those roles she appeared in as the original actress, reinforcing the continued confidence playwrights had in her helping draw audiences and make their plays a success. It also suggests that she was adept at learning new roles even as she aged, and that she learned to adapt in order to please her audience. She appeared as the original role of Miss Lucretia McTab in Colman's comedy *The Poor Gentleman* and the original Norah O'Blarney in W.W. Dibdin's farce *The Cabinet* during the 1800-1801 season, performed the original Mrs. Sapling in Frederick Reynold's comedy *Delays and Blunders* and the original Fiametta in Thomas Holcroft's *A Tale of Mystery* during the 1802-1803 season. During the 1804-1805 season she performed as the original Mrs. Glastonbury in Colman's comedy *Who Wants a Guinea?*, the original Camilla in Monk Lewis's melodrama *Rugantino* during the 1805-1806 season, and performed as the original Githa in W. Dimond's melodrama *Adrian and Orsila* and as the original Lady Trot in Morton's comedy *Town and Country* during the 1806-1807 season. Her final performance on 7 June 1808 was as Flora, a role with which she was familiar, in Centlivre's *The Wonder! A Woman Keeps a Secret*, one of the eighteenth century's most popular plays; she also received a benefit night and spoke a final farewell address.

During her career, Isabella appeared in at least forty original roles, suggesting both her popularity as an actress with audiences and with playwrights, whose livelihood depended on the popularity of actresses in drawing audiences. Indeed, Isabella transformed herself from actress to celebrity and even when she was sixty years old she continued to perform in original roles. Isabella's popularity as an actress also gave her credibility as a fashionable woman. (See Figure 4.13) According to one theatre critic, "Mrs. Mattocks was as much celebrated for the taste and elegance of her dress as for her histrionic talents."<sup>77</sup> The gentleman further noted that "the various dresses of Mrs. Mattocks after they had passed the ordeal of the female critics in the theatre, and had been there displayed to the admiration of the town, were frequently sent for by the principal ladies of Liverpool, and other towns in the country, who adopted and spread the fashion."<sup>78</sup>

Isabella's reputation as an actress is reflected in her long-lasting stage career, which makes her, amongst these four Hallam women, the most celebrated and successful actress. In comparison, her mother, Mrs. Hallam, is recorded as having performed in London between 1746 and 1751 (when she left for America and left the London stage permanently) 274 times, with 148 appearances at the Covent Garden Theatre, ninety-two at Goodman's Fields Theatre, sixty-four performances at Lincoln's Inns Fields (twenty-eight of these performances are cross-referenced with Covent Garden Theatre performances), once at each of these minor London theatres the York Building, New Wells, London Spa in Clerkenwell; and two performances at the New Wells Theatre on Lemon (or Leman) Street.<sup>79</sup> Isabella's aunt Ann Barrington, like Isabella, maintained a long-lasting career onstage. Under the name Mrs. Sacheverel Hale, Isabella's aunt Ann performed in London 233 times between 1739 and 1749 with 231 of those performances being at the Covent Garden Theatre, the other two at Lincoln's Inn Fields and the Haymarket Theatre. After her marriage to John Barrington, Ann performed as Mrs. Barrington, and between 1749 and 1772 she is recorded having performed 259 times exclusively at the Covent Garden Theatre. The year Isabella began performing in London, 1752, was one of Ann Barrington's busiest, with eighteen of her twenty-four performances taking place between 20 September and 27 December.<sup>80</sup> As a London actress, Ann Barrington is recorded as having performed 490 times in London theatres, the majority of performances taking place at the Covent Garden Theatre where both of her husbands had been principal actors. Because Isabella and Ann both remained in London performing, it is easier to compare their statistics as actresses. Isabella's busiest years as an actress were between ages nineteen and thirty (1765-1776) when she performed 440 times, mostly with the Covent Garden Theatre. Between ages nineteen and thirty, her aunt Ann, on the other hand, is recorded as having performed in London (mostly at the Covent Garden Theatre) 268 times. Thus if measured by recorded performances, Isabella's success as a London actress,

and the highest mark of celebrity status for an actress at the time, was undeniably greater than her aunt's since her performances exceeded her aunt's by 172 performances.

Comparing Isabella's performances in London with her mother's performances is not quite as straightforward, though in a short five year period between 1746 and 1751 when Mrs. Hallam was busy having and raising babies (at least Isabella was born during this time), she performed onstage in London 274 times with forty of those performances (and the most Mrs. Hallam gave in one year) being given in 1746, the year Isabella was born.<sup>81</sup> Isabella had one daughter and thus her career was not as shortened because of pregnancies or having to raise a large family. Isabella had three years when she performed over forty times in London, in 1772 (forty-six performances), 1774 (forty-eight performances) and 1775 (forty-three performances). In 1772, Isabella would have been twenty-six years old, the same age her mother had been when she made forty appearances as an actress in London. Similarly, Ann Barrington (performing as Mrs. Sacheverel Hale at the time) also was at her busiest performing when she was twenty-five through twenty-eight years old with thirty-four performances given in 1745, twenty-six performances in 1746 and thirty-five performances in 1748, suggesting that, at least for this family of actresses, their most successful and busiest years were in their mid-twenties.

Isabella Hallam Mattocks represents a true celebrity in both her accomplishments as an actress and her extended career onstage in London's licensed theatres, Covent Garden and Drury Lane. Her name appeared regularly on playbills in London and more provincially as both an actress and a singer. She remained with the Covent Garden Theatre for almost her entire theatrical career of fifty-six years, beginning in September 1752 and ending with her last performance on 7 June 1808. Isabella performed every year in London except for three recorded years. Her name is absent from London theatre records for the years 1759 and 1760, when she was thirteen or fourteen years old and for the year 1785 when she was almost forty. She married once, although not happily, had at least one brief affair with a fellow actor, and had one daughter. Her portrait

was painted and then copied into prints for a more affordable and more portable theatre memento. As a highly visible performer, Isabella Mattocks presented her own unique version of femininity and control. Even in 1796 at age fifty, Isabella appeared onstage at the Covent Garden Theatre thirty times and would make at least seventy more appearances onstage at the Covent Garden Theatre and two at the Haymarket Theatre before the end of 1800. During her last eight years she continued performing, less frequently, but still with high regard and after she retired from the stage in 1808 she lived another eighteen years, provided for by her remaining money (in spite of being swindled out of 6000 by her daughter's husband) and the Royal pension. Of Isabella's career, one biographer wrote,

An indifferent performer in tragedy and a second-rate singer in opera, Mrs. Mattocks rose to the front rank in comedy. In light and genteel comedy she obtained a distinct success, but her triumph was in chambermaids...The 'Theatrical Biography' of 1772 credits her with ability to realize her parts, with sensibility, a pleasing person, and an agreeable voice...and Anthony Pasquin, after some severe strictures, says in his 'Children of Thespis': Her Peckham, her Flirts, and her Adelaides charm me, / And her epilogue-speaking can gladden and warm me.<sup>82</sup>

The idea that Isabella was admired for her roles as chambermaids is very curious and speaks about audience—both suggesting views about their awareness of the roles of chambermaids in daily life (as comic relief to their own world) and how women might be clever and funny, but only if they are placed in subservient roles.

Isabella's talent for performing in comic roles may have helped her ascendancy to celebrity status since comedies became the most popular theatre genre before the introduction of melodrama at the end of the eighteenth century. Not surprisingly, Isabella, like many actresses of her time, did not adhere to stereotypical gender roles and theatre made it possible for her to move fluidly from gender space to gender space, throwing off female constraints when convenient. She presented herself onstage and in print, selling her performances (in essence her body) for public consumption and entertainment. She died in Kensington at the age of eighty on 25 June 1826, subsisting on a pension given to her by the British royals.

### Nancy Hallam and the American Company

The fourth and final Hallam family member discussed in this chapter, Nancy Hallam (fl. 1759-1774), was the daughter of William Hallam and his wife Ann(e). While she was born in London, Nancy was living with her parents in Tortola when her father died there in 1758.<sup>83</sup> In his last will and testament written on 2 August 1758, William Hallam mentions two daughters, Mary and Ann (the diminutive form of which is Nancy), with his wife, Ann(e);<sup>84</sup>

I give and bequeath unto my well beloved wife Ann Hallam and my two daughters Ann and Mary Hallam all and every one of my Clothes and Scenes belonging or in any wise appertaining to the Stage...and whereas my Wife Ann Hallam not being capable to manage or Carry on the affairs of the Stage, I do therefore constitute nominate and appoint my Trusty and well beloved friend John Harman [later of the London Company] my whole and sole Executor to this my last will and Testament...<sup>85</sup>

By 1759, shortly after her father's death, Nancy Hallam and Mr. and Mrs. Harman (the same Mr. Harman mentioned in Hallam's will) are listed amongst performers in Douglass's company.<sup>86</sup>

Nancy Hallam is listed performing in the role of Duke of York in Shakespeare's *Richard III*, when she first appeared with Douglass's company in Philadelphia on 29 June 1759. This was the same role that her cousin Isabella performed during her first season in London in 1752. These roles were usually given to young girls suggesting she was probably about seven years old, making her birth around 1751 or 1752.<sup>87</sup> Her aunt, Mrs. Douglass, performed the role of Queen Elizabeth, providing onstage support to her niece just as Ann Barrington had performed the role of Queen Elizabeth to Isabella's Duke of York.<sup>88</sup> Her career onstage in America lasted for fifteen years and although she did not enjoy the long career that the other Hallam women did, Nancy Hallam made an impression on the American stage regardless. In the years leading up to the American Revolution when American theatre was a highly contested space where colonists argued about embracing such overt British culture, Nancy Hallam appeared to win the hearts of admirers. Immortalized in print and celebrated in portraiture, individual authors lauded Nancy's performances in local papers (rather than commenting on the ensemble) and in 1771, newly

established artist Charles Willson Peale painted her in costume for his own private collection. Since such portraiture of actresses in America was uncommon, Peale's painting of Nancy Hallam takes on even greater meaning and suggests the level of celebrity status, albeit temporary, that she achieved in her brief time on the American stage and the level of legitimacy that American theatre had gained by 1771. However, after her explosive and influential fifteen-year tour on the American stage when the American Company completed its 1774 season in Charleston, on the cusp of the American Revolution, Nancy Hallam left theatre when the company left for Jamaica. She probably married a gentleman in Jamaica (a "Miss Hallam" married a Jamaican organist by the name of John Raymond in 1775), and eventually returned to Falmouth, England where she quietly removed herself from public life.

### **American Media and the Celebrity**

During the second half of the eighteenth century, Anglophone newspapers became sites of social and cultural exchange. Unlike newspapers in Britain, however, American newspapers, particularly during the Revolutionary era, risked censorship, interruption, and unstable public support.<sup>89</sup> For our study, however, it is important to note that American newspapers also helped generate and solidify the growing celebrity status of actresses.<sup>90</sup> Performances were announced and criticized in newspapers, actresses were marketed for their previous reputations as London performers. Published plays were sold, and admirers published poems and essays dedicated to actresses they adored. In September 1770, the *Maryland Gazette* colonial officer William Eddis, identifying himself as "Y.Z." found Nancy Hallam "exceeded the utmost idea. Such delicacy of manner! Such classical strictness of expression! ... How true and thorough her knowledge of the character she personated...methought I heard once more the warbling of [Colley] Cibber in my ear."<sup>91</sup> The only aspect of the performance that marred her "Vox Liquida" was "the horrid ruggedness of the roof, and the untoward construction of the whole house."<sup>92</sup>

Reverend Jonathan Boucher, rector of St. Anne Episcopal Church, Maryland, using the pseudonym *Paladour*, also sang Hallam's praises in the 10 October 1771 *Maryland Gazette* for her performance a month later as Imogen in Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*. Boucher's rather extensive thirty-six-line poem published on the paper's four page in the Poet's Corner suggests the interconnected relationship between newspapers, theatre and celebrity culture;

To Miss Hallam,  
On seeing her last Monday Night in the Character of Imogen

Say, Hallam! to thy wond'rous Art  
What Tribute shall I pay?  
Say, will thou, from a feeling Heart,  
Accept this votive Lay?

...

Long have my Scenes each British Heart  
With warmest Transports fill'd;  
Now equal Praise, by Hallam's Art,  
America shall yield."<sup>93</sup>

In addition to singing praises to Nancy Hallam, the poet ends his adulation of the actress by bringing British cultural identity face to face with American sensibilities. Recognizing that Shakespeare had long entertained British society, the poet separates American audiences out and gives them their own unique identity. He claims that because of Nancy Hallam's performance as Imogene, America will now yield to (and perhaps understand) Britain's great playwright.

The suggestion that Shakespeare becomes more accessible to American audiences through Nancy Hallam is intriguing. Frances Teague argues that "while Shakespeare's plays were familiar and rarely caused controversy, just prior to the American Revolution he became a figure who is both valuable as England's national poet, and available for American appropriation" just as Boucher's poem suggests at the end.<sup>94</sup> Although Shakespeare serves as a symbol of national identity for British troops stationed in America before and during the American Revolution, he is relatively absent for American audiences before the Revolution. Yet as theatre in America took root and "as the American colonists began to examine critically their relationship with Britain,

[Shakespeare] suddenly appears in American culture.”<sup>95</sup> In fact, Teague argues, “[Shakespeare’s] presence becomes more and more common, and after the American Revolution, Americans would claim him as their own...Appropriating [the works of Shakespeare] whether in parody or in defense of liberty, was an especially gratifying act of rebellion, precisely because he was so closely associated with England.”<sup>96</sup> Thus by 1771, when Nancy Hallam appeared in Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline*, not only did she engage in a form of cultural diplomacy by helping to bridge the cultural bond between America and Britain, she stood also symbolically at the cultural divide between America and Britain.<sup>97</sup> As a theatre manager, Douglass cleverly appropriated *Cymbeline* as a political commentary on the tensions arising between Britain and America,



Figure. 4.14 Nancy Hallam as Fidele in Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline*, Charles Willson Peale, 1771. Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

wherein Britain becomes the invading Roman nation and America becomes transformed into invaded Ancient Britain. Even Imogen/Fidele in a way stands for the common American citizen who does not wish to listen to the King/father and instead acts in rebellion, goes in disguise, escapes several murder plots and plots to expose Imogen’s supposed “infidelity.” In the end it is Imogen/Fidele (as the American) who wins the audience’s respect.

## Nancy Hallam's Portrait by Charles Willson Peale

Nancy Hallam's praises were not only sung in the newspapers. Eighteenth-century artist Charles Willson Peale (1741-1827) painted Nancy's portrait in 1771. Having settled in Annapolis, Maryland, in 1767, Peale painted some of the most unique Americans of the period, including portraits of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Mohawk military leader Joseph Brandt, Merriweather Lewis and William Clark, and printer and newspublisher Anne Catherine Hoof Green, a woman who became the official publisher of the colony of Maryland after her husband's death, publishing the *Maryland Gazette*, the same newspaper that had published the verses on Nancy Hallam.<sup>98</sup> Two years after Peale painted Hoof Green's portrait, he painted Nancy Hallam in 1771, dressed in the costume of Fidele from her performance in Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* (See Figure 4.14). The portrait of Nancy Hallam assured her of her status as "American heroine," and cultural phenomenon and Peale's portrait serves to elevate both Shakespeare and Nancy Hallam into positions of cultural importance in America.

Peale's subjects in general comprised characters he associated with being the most celebrated and intriguing Americans of the period, individuals who possessed uniquely "American" qualities. Washington, of course, represented American independence, integrity, and honor. William and Clark represented the spirit of independence and discovery. Mohawk Chief Joseph Brandt represented the true iconic natural "American" character and Peale made sure to represent him in native costume rather than in European attire. Publisher Anne Catherine Hoof Green successfully ran a business dominated by men and her work symbolized intellectual and cultural freedom of expression. Peale's portrait of Nancy Hallam includes her in this elite company of unique "American" characters and, as the earliest recognized portrait of American actor, she comes to represent not just the ascent of American actresses into celebrities but the importance culturally, socially and politically, that theatre had come to take on in American

culture.<sup>99</sup> The painting of Hallam as Fidele remained in Peale's family and was eventually donated to Colonial Williamsburg where it is currently on display.<sup>100</sup>

Peale's portrait of Nancy Hallam is important because actress portraits were not made in America before her portrait was painted, and because Peale chose to paint her cross-dressed as a boy and in Turkish costume, a style of fashion popular in Britain and America during the last three decades of the eighteenth century.<sup>101</sup> Some of Britain's most famous portrait artists including Sir Joshua Reynolds (Kitty Fisher, Sarah Siddons, Frances Abington, Mary Robinson, Nelly O'Brien), Simon Verelst (Nell Gwyn), Sir Peter Lely (Nell Gwyn, Margaret Hughes, Moll Davis), George Knapp (Lavinia Fenton) painted popular actresses. Most Americans lacked the money to pay for such paintings and did not have the rooms in which to display large portraits (Nancy Hallam's portrait measures 50" x 40.5"). Many Americans also considered portraiture a type of idolatry (particularly Quakers), though by the end of the century portrait artists were becoming more socially accepted.

Finally, while Peale's portrait reveals insights into the inner workings of pre-Revolutionary American theatre, and the idea that American theatre was producing "celebrities" as early as 1771 (individuals worthy of being immortalized in portraiture), Peale's portrait of Nancy Hallam shows cultural interests of late eighteenth-century Anglophone audiences and how British cultural interests, including the acceptance of actresses as celebrities, were translated transatlantically through theatre.<sup>102</sup> In 1771, Nancy Hallam was one of the American Company's lead actresses and had been performing with the company for a dozen years 1759.<sup>103</sup> Hallam's role in *Cymbeline* as Imogen (later disguised as Fidele), daughter of British king, Cymbeline, places her at the center of audience attention and sympathy.<sup>104</sup> She commits herself to a low-born man, is independent-minded and defies her father's (and the king's) demands, is forced to wear male disguise in order to protect herself, drinks a draught her step-mother, the queen believes to be poison but instead causes deep sleep, is almost murdered dressed as Fidele, and is ultimately

saved by his/her beauty. Thus several times Hallam's performance would have brought the audience near tears.

Nancy Hallam remained with the American Company for fifteen years. While she became a celebrated actress both in print and in portraiture, when the group disbanded after their last performance in 1774, Nancy Hallam left as well. She accompanied the American Company to Jamaica where she likely married a man named John Raynard, and eventually returned to England. Once she left America in 1774, her name disappeared from playbills and she does not appear on record as performing onstage in England or America again. Compared with the other three women examined in this chapter, Nancy is the only actress who left the stage prematurely. This phenomenon of the fleeting nature of celebrity status is also an important part of the cultivation of the celebrity in Anglophone theatre. Living in the public eye and receiving public adoration as a performer must have been rewarding, however, at some point Nancy Hallam must also have felt that she wanted something else out of life. If she were a child of say, six or seven years of age when she was taken in by Douglass's Company in 1759, she would have been in her early twenties by 1774, possibly ready to marry and start a family of her own. For all intents and purposes, beginning in 1774 when she stepped offstage in Charleston following her final performance, Nancy Hallam retired from the stage permanently, removing the robe of celebrity and slipping quietly, like the majority of late eighteenth-century Anglophone actresses, behind the curtain of obscurity.

### **Conclusions**

Eighteenth-century Anglophone women participated actively in theatre throughout the Atlantic world. They exchanged ideas, performances, and experiences as they learned to navigate a socially and politically volatile world. Actresses traveled in order to survive financially and

took with them ideas and experiences garnered in a variety of transatlantic settings, from Great Britain to colonial North America and to the British Caribbean. The last quarter of the eighteenth century provided an important exchange of culturally and socially charged ideas influenced by the American Revolution, changing roles for women, and new concepts of freedom, republican motherhood and national pride. In addition, location and a sense of place influenced what these women wrote and performed, and how they interpreted their roles and how, equally important, audiences responded. Ultimately, theatre allowed Anglophone women as actors, playwrights and audience members to better define their own roles in this changing and changed transatlantic world.

The increasing emergence of the cult of celebrity provided popular actresses with public support that in turn generated audience interest that enhanced their celebrity status. While the four actresses discussed in this chapter, Ann Hallam Hale Barrington, Isabella Hallam Mattocks, Nancy Hallam and Mrs. Hallam/Douglass did not marry out of their social class (at least three of the women married actors and raised their children for the stage), they performed with women who did and they also appeared onstage dressed in the clothing of women (and men) outside of their class (both above and below), which allowed British society to question social class structure and even gender. Women became active agents during the eighteenth century in affecting both gender roles and class structure.

While theatre allowed for social ambiguity, it also effectively reinforced the importance of the role of wives and mothers who, through a legitimate industry as performers might provide a living for their families. Ann Barrington and Isabella Hallam, who remained in London, achieved a different quality of celebrity status than did Mrs. Hallam/ Douglass and Nancy Hallam, both of whom performed with more success on American stages. American audiences expected actresses to behave with moral rectitude offstage and they were judged by the roles they chose to perform onstage. In addition, most early American actresses performed in

stock roles rather than original roles that were well-proven to entertain audiences in Britain. The latest plays from London by the last three decades of the eighteenth century were performed on American stages within months of their initial runs, but they appeared in London first, proved themselves popular with audiences and were afterward dispensed to American audiences who appreciated the more conservative tone of these later (often re-written) plays.

While it might be argued that each of these four Hallam women achieved a type of celebrity status, they did not achieve the same level of celebrity-ness. The modest attention and public acknowledgement both Mrs. Hallam/Douglass and Nancy Hallam received as actresses in America was very much in keeping with American attitudes toward theatre and toward the adoration of any individual that resulted in raising the individual over more democratically-minded Americans, while Ann Barrington and Isabella Mattocks thrived in a world accustomed to recognizing actresses as celebrities. The disparate nature of the type of celebrity-ness accessible to Anglophone actresses on both sides of the Atlantic was in part because Americans were removed from the more excessive London lifestyle. Following the American Revolution, however, British culture saw its resurgence in America and Anglophone theatre, along with British-born and trained actresses became even more celebrated.<sup>105</sup>

Comparing the experiences of these four Hallam actresses allows us to understand how time (pre- and post-Revolution), location (London, British circuit, Dublin, British Caribbean, and America), type of performance (utility roles, supporting roles, cross-dressing roles, onstage and offstage antics), influenced (and were influenced by) the level of celebrity status these actresses achieved. For Ann Barrington and Isabella Mattocks, who performed in London where the status of actresses as celebrities was established in the late seventeenth century, the idea of becoming a celebrity was much more tangible and accessible. Likewise, Isabella's cousin, Nancy Hallam, also benefited from appearing onstage in America at a time when American audiences were looking for individuals to admire and when American theatre was legitimate enough and accepted

enough for actresses to receive that admiration. Anglophone theatre's cultural roots allowed the stage to become a platform for social and political discourse throughout the eighteenth century. These four actresses offer insights into the social, political, and cultural constructions of transatlantic Anglophone theatre. In spite of significant distances that separated them, the differences in performance location, theatre quality, roles available, and audience attendance, these four actresses shared a surprising number of experiences and their collective theatre experience of almost seventy years transformed transatlantic Anglophone theatre. More importantly, these four actresses show what British and transatlantic Anglophone actresses accomplished as cultural icons, social instigators and politically engaged citizens.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> The idea of celebrity-ness, I suggest, did not exist for common individuals in Anglophone society before the first seventeenth-century actresses appeared onstage. The only real “celebrities” who existed in British society before 1660 were society's elite—the politically powerful and wealthy monarchy and aristocracy—particularly men with power. Indeed, male performers appeared onstage in England for centuries without ascending to the level of public adoration these first English actresses received within a decade of appearing onstage. The only other individuals who garnered temporary public attention were paraded around like exotic curiosities, people like Powhatan Princess Pocahontas (later known as Rebecca Rolfe) who married John Rolfe and moved from America to London in 1616; or South Pacific Islander, Omai, who traveled to London in 1774. Naturalist Joseph Banks presented Omai to London society's elite. Sir Joshua Reynolds painted Omai in native costume and William Parry painted Omai dressed as a European. Both Pocahontas and Omai “performed” their roles as curiosities that the British monarchy used to promote their own increasing power in the world. The first Anglophone actresses, however, were neither foreign exotics nor were they powerful, wealthy, politically savvy men. Born into London's lowest social classes, poorly educated, and with few survival skills other than their looks and their wit, most of these women actually possessed the perfect combination of street-smarts, looks and the survival instinct for and familiarity with “public” performance that allowed them to thrive in the theatre.. In fact, I would argue that their power as performers and their ability to inspire the cult of the female celebrity was a direct result of their commonness and their relatable humanity.

<sup>2</sup> Gwyn became the king's mistress in 1669, four years after she had taken the stage. By the age of twenty, in 1670, Gwyn retired from the stage, gave birth to her first son with Charles II and solidified her position as one of society's most elite women, one of Charles's least demanding and most genuinely adored mistresses. As previously suggested, part of the popularity of actresses for audiences came in their cross-dressing roles. Almost one hundred years after Mary Knepp made her first appearance onstage in London as Epicæne in 1664, cross-dressing roles remained popular roles for London's most celebrated actresses theatres and even made their way transatlantically to theatres in America and in the British Caribbean with Mrs. Hallam's earliest role onstage as Portia in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, a role that required cross-dressing.

<sup>3</sup> Behn's gun-wielding cross-dressing courtesan, Angellica Bianca in *The Rover*, discussed in Chapter Two, hoped for a happily-ever marriage, but was actively prevented from marriage because her position in society as a courtesan, even during the time of Charles II's libertine rule, did not allow her the standard

reward for women. The lack of marriage opportunity for a late-seventeenth-century woman, while it reinforced Angellica's independence in Behn's scenario, represented a very public and harsh onstage punishment. Angellica's position as an unmarried and independent woman whose career choices placed her on the outskirts of society cannot marry since marriage was seen as the ideal reward for women and Angellica is not the ideal woman—indeed she is often characterized as the antithesis of feminine and thus must remain alone and unrewarded even though she wishes to become accepted and socially acceptable. Thus, as Angellica's position onstage suggests, actresses could tap into social moral expectations.

<sup>4</sup> See Felicity Nussbaum, *Rival Queens* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

<sup>5</sup> Theatre managers took advantage of an actress's popularity and promoted her in order to gain audiences and increase profits. She-tragedies featuring actresses in leading roles soon overtook history plays that previously featured strong male characters. Playwrights, including women playwrights, wrote plays specifically for popular actresses. They sought to ensure their plays would last the requisite three nights so they could reap the receipts usually given to playwrights from a play's third night's performance.

<sup>6</sup> 10 October 1771 *Maryland Gazette*.

<sup>7</sup> Fred Inglis, *A Short History of Celebrity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010). Previous discussions about the establishment of celebrity-ness in Anglo culture are addressed in previous chapters, particularly in the Introduction and Chapter Two, which discusses the first Anglophone actresses onstage.



<sup>8</sup> This portrait of Lady Elizabeth Foster by Sir Joshua Reynolds, c. 1787 reflects the style of dress and hair evident in the portrait of Isabella Mattocks as Mrs. Warren, Figure 4.1.2. Lady Foster was best friends with Georgiana Cavendish, Duchess of Devonshire and was considered one of London's most fashionable women. She lived with Georgiana and the Duke of Devonshire for twenty-five years and eventually supplanted Georgiana as Duchess of Devonshire.



<sup>9</sup> This portrait of Georgiana Cavendish, Duchess of Devonshire by Sir Joshua Reynolds, c. 1775 reflects the same style of dress, including feather hair ornaments, seen in the portrait of Isabella Mattocks as Mrs. Warren. The Duchess of Devonshire was considered one of the most fashionable women in London, her style was copied by London's social elite and actresses attempted to dress according to the most fashionable styles that they could afford. Donations of dress and hair ornaments by wealthy admirers to actresses both made actresses appear more fashionable and wealthier and members of London's social elite had the added benefit of seeing their own dresses paraded onstage before them. Georgiana's portrait courtesy of the Cavendish Collection.

<sup>10</sup> The less elite choice of dress worn by American actresses may, in turn, have added to American audience perception of actresses as admirable but socially modest and thus more acceptable. Eighteenth-century American actresses were eventually recognized in print and in portraiture for their beauty and talent, if not to the same degree as their London counterparts. This suggests the portability and transatlantic nature of celebrity for actresses.

<sup>11</sup> Kitty Fisher was a courtesan who “acted” like a celebrity and subsequently became famous for being famous, a phenomenon not unknown today. Fisher certainly took advantage of public interest in public women to promote herself. She likely she saw all the attention paid to actresses of the period. Fisher’s ascendancy to celebrity status suggests that the British public didn’t care so much about how these women became famous, but that their lives and experiences must be interesting because they were famous.

<sup>12</sup> Ann (Hallam Hale) Barrington and Isabella (Hallam) Mattocks, both appeared as the Young Duke in Shakespeare’s *Richard III*, and continued to perform in popular cross-dressing roles throughout their lives. The popularity of cross-dressing roles for actresses continued in Britain and carried over to the transatlantic Anglophone world, in part because of the continued popularity of Shakespeare’s plays and early seventeenth-century plays (an established part of an acting company’s repertoire due to limitations imposed by the Theatre Licensing Act of 1737) that featured cross-dressing female characters. Most of these plays were written when female impersonators took on female roles and thus played on the idea that female impersonators were performing in disguise. Perhaps girl actresses reached a level of maturity and confidence in performing earlier than boys; this seems the case with six-year-old Isabella Hallam who seemed better equipped to act than her twelve-year-old brother, Lewis, although both appeared onstage almost simultaneously on different sides of the Atlantic Ocean.

<sup>13</sup> Mrs. Hallam’s first name remains unconfirmed, and we lack a convincing portrait of her (though two “portraits” identified as her reside in Harvard’s Houghton Library) and Ann Barrington was soon overshadowed by her more-talented niece Isabella.

<sup>14</sup> While most professional performers had left the country in search of more accepting audiences, American theatre during the Revolution was most frequently performed by British soldiers and local women (when available, often mistresses of British officers), usually for the “benefit of widows and orphans” of soldiers—but theatre did continue regardless of Continental Congress’s ban and audiences continued to attend performances. And in spite of rising tensions between America and Britain, theatre flourished during the late 1760s and early 1770s including the advent of the first “American” playwrights like Thomas Godfrey (*Prince of Parthia* 1765) and Mercy Otis Warren (*The Adulateur* 1772, *The Defeat* 1773, *The Group* 1775, *The Blockheads* 1776, *The Motley Assembly* 1779). Clearly “American” theatre was beginning to define itself in plays and in performers.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas Hallam became a naval officer and eventually rose to the rank of admiral. Robert J. Meyers and Joyce Brodowski, argue that George Hallam, not Thomas, was the father of Ann Hallam Barrington and her famous siblings, William, Lewis, Adam and Thomas. See Robert J. Meyers and Joyce Brodowski, “Rewriting the Hallams: Research in 18<sup>th</sup> Century British and American Theatre,” *Theatre Survey* 41 (1) May 2000, 1-22.

<sup>16</sup> By 1745, when Lewis was in his early thirties, he performed regularly at brother William’s theatre at Goodman’s Fields in London. A “Mrs. Hallam” is listed performing with him at the theatre during this time, and although it is not known when they were married, Lewis Hallam was married by January 1745 when their names both appear on the playbill for Centlivre’s *The Busy Body*, with Mrs. Hallam playing the principal roles of Miranda. Mrs. Hallam and her contributions as an actress are discussed in greater detail later in this chapter. Suffice it to say right now that the earliest recorded roles for the “Mrs. Hallam” associated as the wife of Lewis were as ingénues, and tragic young heroines, such as the title role of Jane Shore in Nicolas Rowe’s play of the same name.

<sup>17</sup> In a moment of rage, Macklin thrust his cane through Hallam’s eye, piercing his brain. Hallam died painfully one day later. While Macklin was tried for murder, he was convicted of the lesser charge of manslaughter, though it is not known whether the punishment (branding an “M” on the hand with a iron) was carried out.

<sup>18</sup> The Bartholomew Fair was first given its charter in 1133 and lasted until 1855 when it was shut down because of complaints over disorderly conduct and debauchery. The fair began on 24 August and was meant to last only three days though in its early period it could last up to two weeks. By the time the Hallams were performing at the fair, it would have lasted just three or four days. Any number of

entertainments was presented—theatrical performances, animal shows, tight-rope walkers and acrobats, puppet shows, musical performances, and oddities or “freak” shows could be found. See Henry Morley, *Memoirs of Bartholomew Fair* (Place: Read Books, 2008); George Taylor, *The Theatre of the London Fairs in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960); Allardyce Nicoll, *A History of English Drama 1660-1900* (1955), Vol. II, Early Eighteenth Century Drama, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.

<sup>19</sup> Taylor, *The Theatre of the London Fairs*, 42-43.

<sup>20</sup> Mary Anne Hale first appeared on playbills in 1776, three years after her mother died and continued to perform at the Haymarket Theatre each summer, except for 1786 and 1787, until 1802. A “Miss Hale” received a payment at the Drury Lane Theatre playbills in 1778-1779 but her name did not appear on playbills until the 1780-1781 season. Her last appearance at the Drury Lane Theatre was in the 1786-1787 season. She changed her name to “Mrs. Hale” by the 1796-1797 season, when she performed briefly again at the Drury Lane Theatre and the Haymarket. Mary Ann was not an actress of significant consequence, earning just 2 £ a week at the Haymarket Theatre in 1793 and only 1 £ a week during her appearance in 1796-1797 at the Drury Lane Theatre.

<sup>21</sup> The actual take for the night’s performance was 60 £ less expenses for the cost of the performance of 10 £. 8s. 1d., suggesting that the cost of staging a performance per night was reasonably expensive. In this case the performance cost one sixth of the evening’s take.

<sup>22</sup> Historical records concerning Ann Barrington’s early life are complicated by the fact that Ann’s brother William married an actress called Anne. William’s wife also appeared on stage and potentially would have been listed as Anne Hallam although the title “Mrs. Hallam’s” would have been more likely and appears on record in London playbills. Her brothers, Lewis and Adam Hallam, also married actresses. Lewis’s wife is only ever listed as Mrs. Hallam on playbill records. See Highfill, et. al., *Biographical Dictionary: Abaco to Belfille* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973), 311.

<sup>23</sup> Isabella Hallam Mattocks never mentioned her mother’s name, only offering a vague association that her mother was related to “the Rich family.” Although several sources claim that Lewis Hallam Sr.’s wife’s name was Sarah, this claim is not grounded in any tangible evidence. Mrs. Hallam may have been the daughter or relation of Lincoln’s Inn Fields Theatre manager, John Rich (1692-1761) and his wife Amy (surname unknown) who married in 1726. The Richs did have a daughter named Charlotte who married a tenor named John Beard in 1759, and may have had children named Sarah (1720-1770) who married George Voelecker in 1760, John (1735-1737) and Elizabeth (1737-1746). Her daughter Isabella Hallam Mattocks later wrote that she had some connection to the Rich family. John Rich having once managed the New Theatre at Lincoln’s Inn Fields and Lewis Hallam having performed there under Rich’s management, though Isabella, by the end of her life, may have considered her aunt Ann her mother, connecting Ann Barrington with Lady Anne Barrington, née Rich, whose portrait exists in London’s National Portrait Gallery. See *The Stage’s Glory: John Rich 1692-1761* (Dover, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2011), 18-19. The confusion about Mrs. Hallam’s name might be connected to the fact that her son, Lewis Hallam, Jr., married a woman in Jamaica by the name of Sarah Perry by 1766. Sarah joined the London Company of Comedians for a brief period, as any new member of an acting family might be wont to do, but within a few years she parted ways with Lewis, Jr. They did not have any children. Sarah Perry Hallam remained in Williamsburg, a place where she had performed, after their separation, and ran a dancing school for girls in the 1780s. After Sarah Perry Hallam died, Lewis Hallam, Jr., married an actress in the company, Eliza Tuke, after cohabiting with her for some time. Lewis Hallam, Jr., married an actress in the company, Eliza Tuke, after cohabiting with her for some time. See Heather S. Nathans, *Early American Theatre from the Revolution to Thomas Jefferson* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 46.

<sup>24</sup> Highfill, et. al., *Biographical Dictionary*, 7: 37-38. See also Portrait of Mrs. John Hallam by Thomas Gainsborough. Courtesy of the Art Museum at the University of Kentucky. <http://www.kentucky.com/2013/06/27/2694557/rare-opportunity-brings-exhibit.html#storylink=cpy> Accessed 12 September 2015.

<sup>25</sup> The following account suggests the dangers traveling performers faced in America. Actress Ann Storer, older sister of Maria Storer, and John Henry had set up house together in 1768 and she had assumed his name. By winter 1772-3 she separated from Henry and had gone to Dublin to act and he to Jamaica. She married actor John Hogg in 1794 and had several children by him. Ann was John Henry's second Storer "wife." He had married first sister Jane by 1765 and had two children by her. When the Storers and Henrys left for America to join the American Company in August 1767, their brig *Dolphin* caught fire four miles from Newport Rhode Island and Jane, Sarah Storer and Mrs Storer all perished in the fire. (See *Newport Mercury* 24-31 August 1767.) Ann Storer died in New York in 1816.

"The following is a particular and authentic Account of the melancholy Accident which happened on board of the Brig *Dolphin*, commanded by Capt. John Malbone, of this town, viz. Last Wednesday night she arrived off Point Judith, from Jamaica and when within five Miles from Land, at half after ten o'clock the same Night, a Negro Boy went down between the Decks, amongst the Run where there stood several Puncheons of Water, and (as he says) with an Intention to draw some Water, but mistook, and broached a Cask of Run; at the same Time the Door of the Lantern, in which he carried the Candle, being open, and the Candle falling into the Run, set it on Fire; This so affrighted the Boy, that he neglected to stop the Running of the Rum, and in less than half a Minute the Head of the Cask flew out, and the Flames were immediately communicated to fifteen casks more, all between Decks, so that all possible Means to extinguish it proved ineffectual; the Vessel was all in Flames in a very few Minutes, and consequently reduced twenty-six Persons, being the Number of People, including Passengers, on board, to a Distress and Horror that must be left to the Reader's imagination;--among many of them subsisted the tender and endearing Connections of Husband and Wife, Parent and Child, Brother and Sister, etc., between whom the merciless Flames were now effecting a cruel and inevitable Separation; and it was with the utmost Difficulty that a Soul on board saved his Life.—There were eleven Passengers, viz.—Mr. John Henry, Mr. William Brooks Simson, Mr. Nathaniel Green, Mrs. Storer, Mrs. Henry, Miss Ann Storer, and Mr. Henry's two children, one sixteen months and the other four months old; five of whom perished in the following Manner, viz. Mrs. Storer, Miss Sarah Storer, and Mr. Henry's two Children being in the Cabbin [sic], were suffocated with the Smoke before the two small Boats could be got out, they being thrown over with the utmost Difficulty, not having any Thing ready to hoist them; Mrs. Henry was upon the Deck, with her Sisters, and might have been saved with them, but overcome with maternal Love and Affection on having her Mother cry out, *The Children*, oh the Children, she ran and threw herself headlong down the Companion, into the Flames, and was there instantly consumed. The Remainder of the People, to the number of twenty-one, got ashore with Difficulty, in the two small Boats, not without being wet in landing; some of them, the same Night, with Trouble and Fatigue, got up to the House of Mr. Silas Niles, who received them with great Humanity, and afforded them all the Assistance in his Power. The vessel burned until eight o'clock the next Day, when she sunk." As quoted in Highfill, et. al., *A Biographical Dictionary*, Volume 14, 313-314.

<sup>26</sup> Highfill, et. al., *Biographical Dictionary*, Volume 7, 39.

<sup>27</sup> Ireland, *Record of the New York Stage: From 1750 to 1860*, Vol. 1, (1866), 21.

<sup>28</sup> Hornblow, *A History of the Theatre in America from Its Beginnings to the Present Time*, Vol. 1 (1919), 70.

<sup>29</sup> As quoted in Highfill, et. al., *Biographical Dictionary*, Volume 7, 37.

<sup>30</sup> Mrs. Hallam might have become pregnant and miscarried, certainly a possibility with the stress from performing and traveling and caring for her family, or she may have had other children while in America who did not survive. Like the majority of eighteenth-century working-class women (albeit steadily employed with a decent wage), Mrs. Hallam was not a woman known to commit much to paper, as the absence of any extent letters to daughter Isabella suggests, and thus any unsuccessful pregnancies were not noted, if any did occur. Life on the road (or by ship) was hard for these early touring families and Mrs. Hallam would have had her hands full with an infant or even with a young daughter Isabella's age.

<sup>31</sup> The complete list of original performers in Lewis Hallam's London Company of Comedians included Lewis Hallam, Sr., Mrs. Hallam, their children Lewis Hallam, Jr., Adam and a daughter; Mr. and Mrs.

Rigby, Mr. and Mrs. Clarkeson, Miss Palmer, Mr. Singleton, Mr. Herbert, Mr. Wynell, Mr. Adcock and Mr. Malone.

<sup>32</sup> The *Virginia Gazette* advertisements, according to the announcement at the bottom of the newspaper's fourth page, sold at three shillings the first week, with an additional two shillings charged for advertisements taken out in weeks thereafter. This means that the cost for the London Company to advertise their performances each week was made up on the ticket price for one seat in the gallery. *Virginia Gazette*, 28 August 1752, 3. Printed by William Hunter.

<sup>33</sup> Along with Mrs. Hallam in the role of Portia, Mrs. Adcock appeared in the role of Nerissa and Mrs. Rigby played Jessica. Mrs. Adcock again appeared onstage in the evening's afterpiece as Beatrice.

<sup>34</sup> In fact, the role of Portia was coveted and some of London's most celebrated eighteenth-century actresses Sarah Siddons (1755-1831), Frances Abington (1737-1815) and Elizabeth Whitlock (1761-1836), Siddon's younger sister, each performed it throughout their careers, with the fresh-from-London Whitlock performing as Portia in Philadelphia during her first season there in 1794. Both Sarah Siddons and Elizabeth Whitlock will be discussed in a later chapter comparing their status as celebrity actresses.

<sup>35</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*.

<sup>36</sup> *Virginia Gazette*, 22 September 1752, 3. Printed by William Hunter.

<sup>37</sup> Money lending had traditionally been allowed in Jewish culture prior to the Middle Ages. By the later Middle Ages, some Christian Merchants began lending money and Jews lost their position as money lenders. Henry IV of England prohibited Italian bankers from taking funds away from his country (Italy had a large resource for money lenders in the form of free enterprise bankers, hence Shakespeare's placement of his play in Venice). The Royal London Exchange was established in England in 1565 and the modern idea of banking in England emerged during the seventeenth century with banks now able to take deposits, lend money and transfer funds. The establishment of a banking system allowed for commercial and industrial growth, particularly in Amsterdam and London, the success of which helped spread the concept of banking more widely in Europe. The rise of Protestantism (much appreciated by American audiences) ultimately allowed European Christians to free themselves from money lenders and the practice of usury. The Royal Bank of Scotland opened in 1728 and the concept of central banking grew popular by 1770. The first bank in America was the Bank of New York, established in 1784, followed by the First Bank of the United States in Philadelphia in 1791 under the direction of the first Secretary of the Treasury, Alexander Hamilton and the State Street Corporation in Boston in 1792.

<sup>38</sup> Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* (I, ii).

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, (IV, I).

<sup>40</sup> As quoted in Ireland, *Records of the New York Stage from 1750–1860*, 21.

<sup>41</sup> For more on Peyton Randolph see John Reardon, *Peyton Randolph, 1721-1775: One Who Presided* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1981).

<sup>42</sup> Dunlap, *A History of the American Theatre from Its Origins to 1832*, 30.

<sup>43</sup> Two male felons were deemed guilty and ordered "burnt in the Hand" while one potential felon, a woman by the name of Abigail Beaner (?), was acquitted.. *Virginia Gazette*, 12 June 1752, . Accessed on 12 February 2014;

<http://research.history.org/DigitalLibrary/VirginiaGazette/VGImagePopup.cfm?ID=1253&Res=HI>

<sup>44</sup> *Virginia Gazette*, 12 June 1752, 2. Accessed on 12 February 2014;

<http://research.history.org/DigitalLibrary/VirginiaGazette/VGImagePopup.cfm?ID=1253&Res=HI>

<sup>45</sup> Changing one's name seems a logical move in running away, but dressing as a man seems a little more creative, and more Portia-like, if she managed to pull it off, especially if Mary Hunt was as good looking as the advertisement suggested. Hunt's escape was also not the only escape mentioned in the same edition of the *Virginia Gazette*. Given the world of slavery and servitude upon which eighteenth-century Virginia

operated, the idea that people wanted to run away from their current situations is not surprising. Seven other persons—slave, servant and wife—were advertised as having recently run off. Perhaps had Mary Hunt remained in the area when Hallam’s Company arrived she might have been able to join their Company. For certainly actresses were known to appear in breeches roles and even to make a quick escape when creditors came calling. *Virginia Gazette*, 12 June 1752, 2-4. Accessed on 12 February 2014; <http://research.history.org/DigitalLibrary/VirginiaGazette/VGImagePopup.cfm?ID=1253&Res=HI>

<sup>46</sup> On 8 December 1660, Thomas Killigrew staged *Othello* at the remodeled Gibbon’s Tennis Courts or Theatre Royal Vere Street, then home of the King’s Company (Samuel Pepys called it “The Theatre” in his journal) one month after the theatre opened and three months after his company was officially given permission to stage actresses. While Anne Marshall was his premier actress, she is not noted in the role and it is possible the lesser known Margaret Hughes played the role during this performance instead. A prologue written by former actor Thomas Jordan for the occasion of this performance suggests that this was the first time an actress legitimately appeared onstage in England and is worth quoting extensively for its insight into seventeenth-century perceptions of actresses: “I Come, unknown to any of the rest / To tell the news; I saw the lady drest--/ The woman plays to-day; mistake me not / No man in gown or page in petticoat. / A Woman to my knowledge...” Even though this prologue contains sexualized images of the actor seeing the lady dress for her performance and the idea that she is a woman to his “knowledge” (likely taken by the audience as double entendre for literal and carnal knowledge) Jordan also presents various difficulties seventeenth-century actresses faced in choosing to perform in public. He defends the notion that actresses as working public women accepted in other countries as such might also be virtuous in England;

Tis possible a vertuous woman may  
Abhor all sorts of looseness, and yet play;  
Play on the Stage, where all eyes are upon her;--  
Shall we count that a crime *France* calls an *honour*?  
In other Kingdons Husbands safely trust ‘em,  
The difference lies onely [sic] in the custom.  
And let it be our custom I advise,  
I’m sure this Custom’s better than th’Excise.

The Prologue humorously concludes;

Our women are defective, and so siz’d  
You’d think they were some of the Guard disguiz’d;  
For (to speak truth) men act, that are between  
Forty and fifty, Wenches of fifteen;  
With bone so large, and nerve so incompilant,  
When you call *Desdemona*, enter Giant;  
We shall purge every thing that is unclean,  
Lascivious, scurrilous, impious or obscene;  
And when we’ve put all things in this fair way  
*Barebones* himself may come to see a Play.

Jordan suggests that having Anglophone women appear onstage in female roles “purges” everything immoral and “obscene” about theatre, including the grotesqueness of seeing old men perform in the roles of ingénues. He argues that the introduction of actresses actually elevates the moral status of theatre and that even the most radically and religiously conservative *Barebone* himself (a reference to Praise-God Barebone also called Barbon, a seventeenth-century preacher who gave his name to the Barebone Parliament in England in 1653, a last effort to control the English government before installing Oliver Cromwell) would find nothing wrong with theatre. As quoted in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespearean Tragedy*, ed. Claire McEachern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 275. *Fiona Ritchie, Women and Shakespeare in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 4.

<sup>47</sup> On 17 September 1753 the London Company of Comedians began performing in New York at the New Theatre in Nassau Street. Their first performance included Irish author, Richard Steele's comedy, *The Conscious Lovers* (1722) and Charles Dibdin's 1768 alteration of Colley Cibber's comic opera *Damon and Phillida* (1729). Steele's play, first produced in 1728, departs from earlier bawdier plays in which lovers fling about bawdier humor. Rather, *The Conscious Lovers* rewards the morally upright and well-mannered individual, lessons that American audiences would likely appreciate for their positive moral tone, particularly for audiences that deride theatre as depraved. Mrs. Hallam played Indiana, the unknown daughter who is ultimately recognized by the father from whom she has been separated and raised by her father's sister and is united in marriage to a man betrothed to her half-sister but really in love with Indiana. How interesting for Mrs. Hallam to be playing the role of "lost daughter" when she had a "lost daughter" of her own, little Isabella, left behind with her aunt. Lewis Hallam, Jr., played the role of Daniel, Indiana's servant and "Miss Hallam" (sister Helen) played the role of Lucinda, Indiana's half sister. While it might seem odd that Mrs. Hallam and her daughter play the role of sisters in this play, it was not unusual for popular or successful actresses to continue taking on premier roles, even if they were no longer age (or in some cases size) appropriate. Mrs. Hallam continued to act in younger roles throughout her career, even appearing on 2 November 1759 in Philadelphia as Juliet to her son Lewis's Romeo. While Mrs. Hallam did not take part in the afterpiece, she did give the epilogue that was, according to the playbill, "addressed to the ladies."<sup>47</sup> Quakers didn't want them performing in Philadelphia, yet members of the Philadelphia community were curious about the performers and invited them to the city and there were on 15 April 1754 presenting Philadelphia audiences with Nicholas Rowe's (1674-1718) *The Fair Penitent* (1702/3) and David Garrick's (1717-1779) farce afterpiece, *Miss in Her Teens* (1747). Rowe's play, an adaptation of an earlier play called *The Fatal Dowry*, placed its emphasis on the lead female role, Calista, thus making it a desirable play for prominent actresses. Mrs. Hallam took the role of Calista in this first Philadelphia performance; their first season in Philadelphia was brief, lasting only until 24 June 1754.

<sup>48</sup> At the end of the nineteenth century, Seilhamer commented in a rather accusatory manner, "The Virginians of that period were too busy with schemes of territorial aggrandizement to devote much time to the drama, and the comedians of Hallam's company found the columns of the Virginia Gazette devoted to negotiations with the Mingo, Shawnee and Twightwee, and accounts of Indian massacres instead of criticisms of plays and players." Indeed while Seilhamer's language is dated in his heavy-handed description of colonial interests in "massacres" and in Indian relations, it is likely that colonial Virginians were more interested in communications with their neighbors rather than in editorials about the latest theatrical successes. In examining the *Virginia Gazette* advertisements and editorials between 1752 and 1776, for example, world, colonial and local politics trump space in the paper devoted to theatre, either in advertisements or in comments about plays and players. See George O. Seilhamer, *History of the American Theatre Before the Revolution*, 81-82.

<sup>49</sup> Spoken by Mrs. Hallam on the opening night of the Cruger's Theatre, also known as the New Theatre in New York, 1758. The Epilogue continues:

Yet wise men own, a play well chose may teach  
Such useful moral truths as the parsons preach;  
May teach the heart another's grief to know,  
And melt the soul in tears of generous woe.  
So when the unhappy virtuous fair complains  
In Shakespere's, Lee's or Otway's moving strains,  
The narrowest hearts expanded wide appear,  
And soft compassion drops the pitying tear.  
Or would you warn the thoughtless youth to shun  
Such dangerous arts which numbers have undone,  
A Barnwell's fate can never fail to move,  
And strike with shame and terror lawless love.  
See, plunged in ruin, with a virtuous wife,  
The Gamester weeps, despairs and ends his life.

When Cato bleeds he spends his latest breath,  
 To teach the love of country strong in death.  
 With such examples and a thousand more,  
 Of godlike men who lived in times before,  
 The tragic Muse renewing every age,  
 Makes the dead heroes tread the living stage.  
 But when to social gayety inclined  
 Our comic Muse shall feast the cheerful mind,  
 Fools of all sorts and fops a brainless crew,  
 To raise your mirth we'll summon to your view;  
 Make each pert coxcomb merry with his brother,  
 Whilst knaves conceal'd shall grin at one another.  
 'Tis magic ground we tread, and at our call  
 Those knights appear that represent you all.  
 Yet, hold! methinks I hear some snarler cry,  
 "Pray, madam, why so partial--rat me—why  
 Don't you do justice to your own sweet sex?  
 Are there no prudes, coquettes or jilts to vex?"  
 'Tis granted; vice and folly's not confined  
 To man alone, but spreads to womankind.  
 We frankly own--we may indeed, as well—  
 For every fluttering beau we've an affected belle,  
 Nor has dramatic Satire's candid page  
 Failed to chastise them justly on the stage.  
 Thus human life's our theme--a spacious field  
 Which the soul's noblest entertainments yield.  
 By men of worth admired from time,  
 Who nature's picture never judged a crime;  
 And if the soul in nature's cause we move,  
 The friends of nature cannot disapprove.  
 We trust they do not by the splendid sight  
 Of sparkling eyes that grace our scenes to-night;  
 Then bravely dare to assert the taste you've shown,  
 Nor be ashamed so just a cause to own;  
 And tell our foes what Shakspeare said of old—  
 Our former motto spoke it, I am told—  
 That here the world in miniature you see,  
 And all mankind are players as well as we.

<sup>50</sup> *Virginia Gazette*, October 14, 1773, No. 1159, 1. Printed by Alex. Purdie & John Dixon, eds., Williamsburg.

<sup>3</sup> There is some confusion as to whether William Hallam ran the Goodman's Fields Theatre in London, the New Wells Theatre in London or the theatre otherwise known as Goodman's Field's New Wells Theatre. After examining a variety of sources, including those that suggest that Goodman's Fields Theatre closed its doors in 1742 and was torn down in 1746, I would offer that William Hallam likely managed the rather confusingly named Goodman's Fields New Wells Theatre.

<sup>52</sup> In a letter Isabella Mattocks wrote to "J. Hill Esq. of Henrietta St. Covent Garden" on 19 June 1800, Isabella Mattocks stated she was born in 1746 but also claimed that she was only four years old when her parents left for America in 1752 rather than six, placing the date of her birth closer to 1748. John See Philip H. Highfill, et. al., *Biographical Dictionary of Actors: Actresses*, Vol. 7, 147. Abigail Adams commented on seeing the great Sarah Siddons perform in the character of Desdemona in Shakespeare's *Othello* (c. 1603) on 24 September 1785 "in her present situation" [i.e., pregnant]. Adams showed surprised that

Siddons could perform so admirably while pregnant in the letter she wrote to her son, John Quincy Adams. Adams commented that even though she believed pregnancy “renders it impossible for her to Play so well as formerly, yet I think She [Siddons] answered my expectations [of a great performance].” Perhaps pregnant women taking on character roles and continuing to work regardless of how pregnant they were helped demystify pregnancy and allowed the audience “forget” that these actresses were, in fact, pregnant. How much more pathetic Desdemona might seem pleading for her life with Othello in her “present situation” so obvious to the audience. Abigail Adams continued in her praise of Siddons performing pregnant stating quite enthusiastically, “I never was so much pleased with any person I ever saw upon any theatre. Her Countenance is certainly expressive of every thing [sic] it ought to be and She has the most perfect command of it. Her voice is inexpressibly Swet [sic] and harmonious. In Short she approaches nearer to perfection than any Woman I ever saw.” Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, 24 September 1785, The Adams Papers, Adams Family Correspondence, Volume 6, No. 7; Massachusetts Historical Society. <http://www.masshist.org/publications/apde/portia.php?mode=p&id=AFC06p380> Accessed 10 February 2014.

<sup>53</sup> When Sarah Siddons failed to impress audiences at London’s Theatre Royal Drury Lane during a brief stint between 1774 and 1777, she left to make a circuit tour of the provinces, working for much of the next six years at theatres in Bath and York, before she returned to the Theatre Royal Drury Lane in October 1782.

<sup>54</sup> Ann Barrington had one daughter, Mary Ann Hale, from her first marriage. No record of her daughter’s performing onstage exists, though it is likely that she followed her parents onto the stage, like her cousin, Isabella. Ann Hallam Hale Barrington’s siblings were George Hallam (f. 1745-1747), William Hallam (1712?-1758?), Lewis Hallam (1714-1756), Adam Hallam (d. 1768) and Thomas Hallam. She was the daughter of Thomas Hallam (d. 1735). Ann’s siblings, except for Thomas Hallam who became a naval officer, were actors and performers. Ann Hallam first married the actor Sacheverel Hale (d. 1746) prior to the 1739-1740 season, and following his death, she married the Irish actor, John Barrington (1715-1773). Ann Hallam Hale Barrington began acting in 1733, her first role being the young Duke of York in Shakespeare’s *Richard III*. See also Highfill, et. al., *Biographical Dictionary: Abaco to Belfille*, 310.

<sup>55</sup> As Catherine Hall argues, “gender, [serves] as a key axis of power in society, [and] provides a crucial understanding of how any society is structured and organized.” Catherine Hall, *White, Male and Middle-Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1992), 12-13.

<sup>56</sup> The Barringtons are merely mentioned as “The uncle and aunt of Miss Hallam. The former was esteemed the best representative of low Irishmen at that time on the stage, particularly of *Teague* in “The Committee.” His wife was respectable in second-rate characters.” Jenkins, *Memoirs*, 39-40. Interestingly, Isabella’s husband, George Mattocks, was also identified through association with Isabella as being “Husband of the celebrated lady of that name, was generally esteemed to be a good vocalist.” It also noted that Mattocks also “first appeared onstage in London in 1750 in *The Chaplet*, was one-time manager at the Liverpool Theatre and died in 1804.” See Jenkins, *Memoirs*, 47.

<sup>57</sup> In her first scene as the, Isabella spoke sixteen lines including the following;

Grandam, one night, as we did sit at supper,  
 My uncle Rivers talk'd how I did grow  
 More than my brother: 'Ay,' quoth my uncle  
 Gloucester,  
 'Small herbs have grace, great weeds do grow apace.'  
 And since, methinks, I would not grow so fast,  
 Because sweet flowers are slow and weeds make haste.  
 William Shakespeare, *Richard III*, Act II, scene iv, 10-16.

<sup>58</sup> As quoted in *The Mirror of Taste and Dramatic Censor*, Volume 3 (Philadelphia: Thomas Barton Zantzinger and Co., 1811), 340.

<sup>59</sup> As quoted in Highfill, et. al., *Biographical Dictionary of Actors*, Vol. 7, 147.

<sup>60</sup> The role of Page was a relatively small one overall in the play. In the first scene Isabella would have been required to memorize twenty-six lines, the largest of which was a six line monologue in which the Page says, “With all the tenderness of love, / You were the subject of their last discourse. / At first I thought it would have fatal prov’d; / But, as the one grew hot, the other cool’d, / And yielded to the frailty of his friend; / At last, after much struggling, ‘twas resolv’d.” Much repetition along with understanding how to present her lines would have been required—an exhaustive process when one considers that Ann Barrington needed to prepare for her own roles onstage. In addition, a child’s voice would have needed training to carry itself within the space of a theatre—and given the general lively tone of most of London’s theatres during the eighteenth century, she would have had to speak up in order to be heard among the din and general audience chatter. Thomas Otway, *The Orphan; or The Unhappy Marriage* (London: D. S. Maurice, Fenchurch Street, 1780). Elizabeth Barry (1658-1713) (for whom it is reported that the love-stricken Otway wrote this very play about unrequited love) performed in the lead role of Monimia in the play’s debut. Lavinia Fenton (1708-1760), later the Duchess of Bolton, began her adult acting career as Monimia in 1726 at the Theatre Royal Haymarket. Isabella performed the role of Serina in *The Orphan* ten years later during the 1762-1763 Covent Garden Theatre season. See Highfill, et. al., *Biographical Dictionary of Actors*: 147.

<sup>61</sup> Richard Jenkins, *Memoirs of the Bristol Stage* (Bristol: Printed for the author by W. H. Somerton, 1826), 74.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, 25.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, 35.

<sup>64</sup> Joseph Hasselwood, *The Secret History of the Green Room*, Vol. I (London: Printed for J. Owen, No. 168 Piccadilly, 1795), 139.

<sup>65</sup> After a few years of performing actors could be given lead roles, secondary roles, walking ladies or gentlemen roles, or general utility roles that filled in where the company needed extra players. Once an actor developed his or her “type” he or she usually spent the rest of his or her career performing in a limited range of character types and often, but not always specialized in comedy, tragedy or drama.

<sup>66</sup> In 1762, during her sixteenth year, Isabella again performed at the Covent Garden Theatre in the role of Juliet on 22 April 1762. During the 1761-1762 season performed as Laura in *The Chaplet* and Dorinda in the George Farquhar’s *Beaux Stratagem*. During the 1762-1763 season, Isabella performed as Isabella in Susanna Centlivre’s *The Wonder! A Woman Keeps a Secret*, Isabinda in Centlivre’s *The Busy Body*, Parisatis in Thomas Betterton’s *The Rival Queens*, Catharine in Shakespeare’s *Henry V*, Serina in Thomas Otway’s *The Orphan*, Selima in Nicolas Rowe’s *Tamerlane*, Diana in Shakespeare’s *All’s Well that Ends Well*, Angelina in Colley Cibber’s *Love Makes a Man*, Belinda in John Vanbrugh’s *The Provok’d Wife*, Rosara in Colley Cibber’s *She Wou’d and She Wou’d Not*, Sylvia in George Farquhar’s *The Recruiting Officer*, Narcissa in Colley Cibber’s *Love’s Last Shift*, Angelica in George Farquhar’s *The Constant Couple*, the Lady in John Dalton’s adaptation of John Milton’s *Comus*, Miss Hoyden in John Vanbrugh’s *The Relapser*, and the original Lucinda in Isaac Bickerstaff’s new dramatic opera *Love in a Village*. *Dictionary of National Biography*, Sidney Lee, ed., Vol. 37, 72-73.

<sup>67</sup> Hasselwood, *The Secret History of the Green Room*, Vol. I, 140.

<sup>68</sup> Highfill, *Biographical Dictionary*, Vol. 10, 148.

<sup>69</sup> See Ben Ross Schneider, Jr., *Index to the London Stage 1660-1800* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1979), 378-379 and 555-556.

<sup>70</sup> *Dictionary of National Biography*, Sidney Lee, ed., Vol. 37, 72-73.

<sup>71</sup> Highfill, *Biographical Dictionary*, Vol. 10, 149.

<sup>72</sup> Schneider, *Index to the London Stage 1660-1800*, 2, 52.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*, 166-167.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 685-686.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, 291-292.

<sup>76</sup> Highfill, *Biographical Dictionary*, Vol. 10, 150.

<sup>77</sup> As quoted in R. J. Broadbent, *Annals of the Liverpool Stage: From the Earliest Period to the Present Time* (Liverpool: E. Howell, 1908), 62.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Schneider, *Index to the London Stage 1660-1800*, 379.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, 49.

<sup>81</sup> During 1746 when Mrs. Hallam had her busiest year as an actress, she performed in January, February and March and again in October, November and December. Her absence from the stage in April and May might suggest this as the time when Isabella was born, though actresses were known to perform right up to the time they were due to deliver.

<sup>82</sup> *Dictionary of National Biography*, Sidney Lee, ed., Vol. 37, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1894), 74.

<sup>83</sup> The name Nancy was often used as a diminutive form of Ann during the eighteenth century, especially useful in distinguishing members of the family when daughter and mother carried the same name.

<sup>84</sup> William Hallam was married to an Ann Hallam and there is also an Anne Hallam (1696-1740), formerly Mrs. Lewis Parker and Mrs. Joseph Berriman, who is also associated with William Hallam, though her birthdate suggests that she would be at least sixteen years older than William Hallam. It is likely that he remarried, and not unusual to have married another woman by the same name., given the popularity of the name Anne. See Philip H. Highfill, et. al., *Biographical Dictionary of Actors*., Vol. 7, 48. See also Odai Johnson, William J. Burling, et. al., *The Colonial American Stage 1665-1774* (Teaneck, NJ: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2001), 187, 189.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> On 16 October 1758, the London Company advertised their recent return to New York from the West Indies “a Company of Comedians; some part of which were here in the year 1753.” Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 193.

<sup>88</sup> By 1761, the family increased again when Lewis Hallam, Jr., married a woman named Sarah from Jamaica who joined the tour and became one of the Mrs. Hallam to appear on playbills. Their marriage would only last a few years before Sarah Hallam left the company and opened a dancing school in Williamsburg.

<sup>89</sup> Thirty-seven newspapers existed in America by 1775 and forty-three by 1783, though only a dozen of the newspapers published in 1775 remained in publication by 1783, the remaining thirty-one newspapers were all new publications. Thus newspapers, like theatre, experienced change during the American Revolution and suffered suppression, public disapprobation, and bankruptcy. Yet newspapers like theatre, in spite of changes caused by revolution—particularly the years between 1770-1785—helped maintain important Anglo-cultural and social connections.

<sup>90</sup> One of the first marks of Nancy Hallam’s rise to celebrity status came ironically from the erroneous announcement of her death in September 1767. Several members of David Douglass’s American Company did perish onboard ship as it made its way into Newport, Rhode Island from Jamaica with props, scenery and several other players, but it was Jane Storer Henry, her mother and her two children who died. Ibid, 256.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Lines that come between these two stanzas are as follows:

A votive Lay to Thee belongs,  
For many a pleasing Tear  
That fell for Imogen's soul Wrongs,  
On fair Fidele's Bier.

Fair, fair Fidele! How thy Charms  
The Huntsman's Pity mov'd!  
Artless as theirs, such soft Alarms  
My melting Bosom prov'd.

In Nature's Breast, superior Joy  
The Pow'r of Beauty wakes;  
And the wild Motion of her Eye  
An easier Prisoner takes.

From earliest Youth; with Rapture, oft  
I've turn'd great Shakespeare's Page;  
Pleas'd, when he's gay, and sooth'd, when soft,  
Or kindled at his Rage.

Yet not till now, till taught by Thee,  
Conceiv'd I Half his Pow'r!  
I read, admiring now I see,  
I only not adore.

Ev'n now, amid the laurel'd Choir  
Of blissful Bards on high,  
Whom list'ning Deities admire,  
The Audience of the Sky!

Methinks I see his smiling Shade,  
And hear him thus Proclaim,  
"In Western Worlds, to this fair Maid,  
I trust my spreading Fame.

*The Maryland Gazette*, 10 October 1771.

<sup>94</sup> Frances Teague, *Shakespeare and the American Popular Stage* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 31.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> As one of the stock pieces in the American Company's repertoire, Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* (a play set in Ancient Britain) was familiar to the actors. The play itself is filled with conversations apt for American audiences in 1771, presenting themes of jealousy, female chastity, love and fidelity, attempted murder (Imogen drinks a sleeping draught the queen, her stepmother believes to be poison), and, perhaps most importantly given anti-British sentiments, invasion by a foreign army. Political tensions throughout the British Empire were coming to a head by 1770 and included America. In 1765, the Quartering Act required local assemblies to pay for the quartering of British troops. The First Carib War (1769-1773) was ongoing, with British military forces pushing to help British expansion on Saint Vincent. The Boston Massacre took place on 5 March 1770, during which the British army killed five male civilians. In January 1771, Spain ceded the Falkland Islands to the British. And, foretelling the escalation of the American conflict with the

British, the Battle of Alamance occurred in North Carolina in May 1771, when a group of protestors who called themselves Regulators, protested British taxation and the corruption of the government. With British oppression in America mounting by 1771, the idea of an army invasion being portrayed onstage is telling and Douglass's choice of *Cymbeline* would have suggested to American audiences that his sympathies were aligned with theirs. That the play presents Ancient Britain being invaded by the Romans, the smaller power being invaded by the greater, makes obvious connections to America's feeling of oppression by the British, whose "armies" threatened to invade American shores. The play ends with Roman prisoners being freed and the king agreeing to resume paying tribute to the Roman emperor, suggesting in the end that rebellion is not an appropriate response (placing the British in the position of the Romans and the Americans with the Ancient Brits).

<sup>98</sup> Peale's portrait of Nancy Hallam came relatively early in his career as an artist when he was just beginning to make a name for himself. Peale was recently returned from training in London with Benjamin West (West also painted actresses and stage scenes), and it is likely that West influenced Peale's interest in theatre as a subject. Having recently made his home in Annapolis, Maryland in 1767, Peale lived there when the American Company actively performed.

<sup>99</sup> Peale's portrait of Nancy Hallam is important because actress portraits were not made in America before her portrait was painted, and because Peale chose to paint her cross-dressed as a boy and in Turkish costume, a style of fashion popular in Britain and America during the last three decades of the eighteenth century. First, portraiture of actresses in America in 1771 when this painting was made was simply not done at the time. Court appointed and portrait artists in Britain were accustomed to painting the most fashionable and popular contemporary actresses, and in England actresses had sat for some of Britain's most famous portrait artists: Sir Joshua Reynolds (Kitty Fisher, Sarah Siddons, Frances Abington, Mary Robinson, Nelly O'Brien), Simon Verelst (Nell Gwyn), Sir Peter Lely (Nell Gwyn, Margaret Hughes, Moll Davis), George Knapton (Lavinia Fenton). But this practice was not transferred to eighteenth-century America with the same enthusiasm, Most Americans lacked the money to pay for such paintings and did not have the rooms in which to display large portraits (Nancy Hallam's portrait measures 50" x 40.5"). Many Americans also considered portraiture a type of idolatry, though by the end of the century portrait artists were becoming more socially accepted, reinforcing the idea that the cult of celebrity had successfully traveled transatlantically. In Britain beginning in 1660 with the first actresses appearing onstage, these women were painted both for private and public consumption, their images often being translated into more consumable, transportable and cheaper forms of printed "entertainment" as etchings and prints, thus increasing the commodification of actresses.

<sup>100</sup> Peale's portrait of Nancy Hallam reveals Douglass's keen sense of theatre management; as does his choice of performances reflected with his finger on the pulse of contemporary events that he reflected onstage in his choice of performances. Using traditional British culture (theatre) to present an awareness of American conflicts with Britain also shows how connected Americans were to Britain in spite of the fact that they wished to assert their social, political and cultural differences.

<sup>101</sup> By the early nineteenth century, portrait artists like Thomas Sully (1783-1872) began to see worth in rendering actress images in painting. Sully painted Fanny Kemble (niece of Sarah Siddons and part of the famous Kemble family) in 1834, and American actress Charlotte Cushman in 1843. Sully also painted a series of Shakespeare characters, including Portia and Shylock (1835), and Macbeth's witches (1840). Late in life, he even made a portrait of Shakespeare himself (1864).

<sup>102</sup> In *Cymbeline*, Fidele is described as beautiful, one reason why he escapes execution. Peale makes no effort to masculinize Hallam, instead painting her as a stage beauty, with porcelain skin, pink cheeks, shapely features and graceful form. Peale reflects this transgendering of beauty that Shakespeare embraced in theatre, and that remained popular throughout British theatre history (quite likely because the first female characters were portrayed by female impersonators and thus character beauty rather than character gender was more important in Anglophone theatre.) While Hallam appears cross-dressing in "breeches" this is hardly the costume that would have shown her form, instead covering her almost completely from head to foot. Her head is covered by a turban, her hair is pulled back, blending into the dark rock cave behind her.

She wears a long-sleeved coat, lace at her wrists, several layers mask her body, Her ankles are barely showing, let alone the shapeliness of her legs. The costume reflects contemporary interest in the exotic interpreted in British style. “Orientalism” or the adoration of clothing styles and mannerisms from the exotic East was just beginning to be embraced by British culture in 1771 and Hallam’s costume is representative of Turkish costume, complete with turban, feather and scimitar. Yet small details are definitely European: her shoes are clearly eighteenth-century European fashion, and the coat, neck piece and lace at the sleeves also reflect British high style popular by 1770 in Britain, Europe and America.

<sup>103</sup> Hallam and Margaret Cheer competed for similar roles; Cheer made her debut with Douglass’s American Company in Charleston in 1764.

<sup>104</sup> Certainly being portrayed in the dress and mannerisms of Imogen, rather than as Fidele, would have made a pretty picture, Peale sought to juxtapose several layers of cultural meaning in his portrait to tell a story, rather than simply to paint a pretty face. Theatre, after all, is all about questioning what is imagined and what is real. First, and most obviously, Hallam wears male clothes of Fidele and carries a saber, which she has already drawn and is ready to use. Yet the saber itself fades away into shadows as if she is afraid to use it (as a woman wielding a weapon against a man would challenge important established roles). In addition, Hallam’s left hand is raised in either appeal or warning, both gestures are possible, depending on the interpretation one has of Hallam’s character as either the feminine Imogen in disguise attempting to protect herself or the masculine Fidele warning off his attacker. Hand held up in appeal and palm facing forward in sign of warning not to draw too close, sword drawn but held back—defensive not offensive, Imogen’s beauty, integrity, honesty, and independent actions may be drawn directly from England’s national bard, but she is representative of a strong character American audiences could and clearly did admire. Imogen stands poised mid-action as if ready to deliver her next line. She stands not fully facing the audience/viewer, but at an angle with her left foot pointing forward, but also in a position that if she wished to flee into the darkness and protection of the cave she might. Neither does she look directly at the viewer, but instead peers upward, not meeting her opponent’s/viewer’s gaze either out of fear (as demure female Imogene) or seeking an escape route (as clever male Fidele).

<sup>105</sup> Actresses like Elizabeth Whitlock, Anne Oldmixon, and even Susannah Rowson received attention because of their British roots and connection to the London stage. Elizabeth Whitlock became one of America’s most recognized celebrity actresses, rising to a level of adoration previously unknown in America—partly due to her association with her celebrity actress sister Sarah Siddons, and partly because America was ready to accept, idolize, and embrace celebrities within their culture.

## CHAPTER 5

### CULTURE, SOCIETY, AND POLITICS REFLECTED IN THE PLAYS OF MERCY

#### OTIS WARREN AND HANNAH COWLEY (1770-1795)

##### Introduction

During the twenty-five year period in which actresses Mrs. Hallam/Douglass, Ann Barrington, Isabella Mattocks, and Nancy Hallam entertained audiences throughout the British Empire, Anglo Americans pondered, discussed, contested, fought, and recovered from the American Revolution (1765-1783). Presenting theatre as British imperialistic propaganda and using theatre to assert a national voice against what colonial Americans imagined as an oppressive imperial British government allowed playwrights and performers to claim theatre as a significant social and political device. It allowed colonists to challenge British authority, establish inter-colonial cohesion and emerge as uniquely nationalistic and noteworthy historical actors on the world stage. Theatre also helped America assert its own social, cultural, and political identity. Both in its purest form as staged entertainment (requiring performers, plays, costumes, theatre spaces, and a live audience) and as published political dialogue (appearing as easily transportable documents in newspapers, brochures, and manuscripts), theater served to rally patriotic fervor in colonial America.

Americans also utilized theatre as a metaphorical device that highlighted and defined intracolonial connections and national qualities while it examined the rising social and political tensions between Britain and America. Plays staged in America the last quarter of the eighteenth century often focused on themes of republicanism, liberty, loyalty, or challenged the audience's political engagement. The importance of theatre to American politicians, colonial militia, colonists, and even British Loyalists and the British military is reflected the choice of government officials to use it as a cultural diplomacy. Dinwiddie incorporated theatre into his diplomatic

exchanges with the Cherokee in November 1752, and George Washington staged Joseph Addison's *Cato: A Tragedy* (1713) at Valley Forge at the end of a long winter. The British military put on extravagant celebrations heavily reliant on theatre such as the *Mischianza* in honor of General Howe in Philadelphia in 1778. Despite these overt uses of theatre to engage with political and social debates, theatre in America during the Revolutionary Era was still highly contested and legally banned. In Britain, on the other hand, the altercation with America rarely appeared in London theatre productions, yet British playwrights, including women playwrights, began to write plays that imagined a strong British national identity, perhaps as a reaction to the American Revolution, which, in essence, fractured the British Empire and challenged what it meant to be "British."

This chapter explores the two very different late-eighteenth-century theatrical landscapes of Britain and America during the Revolutionary Era to reveal myriad ways in which theatre continued to spread social, cultural and political ideology both in Britain and in America in spite of (or perhaps because of) the political tensions and subsequent war that divided the two countries. Because women's views on the political engagements between America and Britain are often overlooked, including their views of women's status in this changing imperialistic conflict, this chapter focuses on the works of two women playwrights: the political plays of American playwright Mercy Otis Warren (1728-1814), and the social comedies of London playwright Hannah Cowley (1743-1809). In her first play *The Adulateur* (1772), Warren lauds patriotic fervor, conflict and the sacrifice of blood;

Oh! Cassius, you inspire a noble passion,  
It glows within me, and every pulse I feel,  
Beats high for glory. I sprang, and Oh! it fires me,  
I sprang from men who fought, who bled for freedom:  
From men who in the conflict laughed at danger;  
Struggled like patriots, and through seas of blood  
Waded to conquest. I'll not disgrace them.  
I'll show a spirit worthy of my fire.<sup>1</sup>

Warren, as the affluent bride of James Warren did not need to make a living by writing plays, yet after the Revolution she sought (unsuccessfully) to have her later plays performed on the London stage. Warren even sent *The Sack of Rome* (a tragedy about the fall of the Roman Empire) to John Adams, who resided in London between 1785 and 1788 as the First Ambassador of America in Britain. Adams was unable (or unwilling) to assist Warren in getting her plays produced, claiming that British audiences were simply not interested in American plays.<sup>2</sup>

On the other side of the Atlantic, Cowley's first play, *The Runaway* (1776),<sup>3</sup> comments on the qualities comprising the ideal woman, "A fine Woman gives warmth to all around her— She is that universal spirit about which Philosophers talk; the true point of attraction that governs Nature, and controuls [sic] the universe of Man."<sup>4</sup> Cowley hints at the potential of women to influence society and cultural interactions without criticizing the expectations held by contemporary audiences.<sup>5</sup> These two very different playwrights provide an interesting transatlantic perspective on plays women produced and published at the end of the eighteenth century, why they were writing these particular plays, and how when they wrote and where in the transatlantic world they wrote influenced ultimately and unequivocally influenced what they wrote.

Warren utilized theatre as a recognized form of British culture to criticize British rule; coupling theatre with poetry enforced her use of Anglo culture as criticism. Warren's plays were written as closet dramas, propaganda pieces intended to be published but not performed publicly. Warren published her plays anonymously and rendered her plots with very few (if any) feminine interactions, making her plays gendered by author and author's voice rather than through character interactions. Theatre in her hands becomes an intriguing cultural device and Warren emerges as a powerful cultural diplomat at the emergence of America as a nation. Because much of this study examines the importance of women as cultural diplomats, Warren's writings and her interpretations of contemporary events will be examined in depth, particularly because of the intentionality of her plays to be used as *intercolonial* rather than transatlantic cultural diplomacy.

While it might be argued that Warren's plays were purely political, Warren's plays and they way they were used as intercolonial diplomacy offer insight into how British culture/theatre was actively used to discuss imperialistic coercion, oppressive British colonial control, and ways in which colonists could and should respond.

The productions and publications of British playwright Hannah Cowley, on the other hand, suggest that women playwrights knew to address social issues important to women such as marriage and women's place in society in light-hearted comedies so as to appear non-threatening. Abandoned by her husband, Cowley supported her family through her writings. Her virtual single-mother status influenced what she wrote and what she was willing to publish. She wrote comedies rather than political pieces because comedies were popular money-makers, because she wrote plays under her own name and perhaps did not want to risk public censure. Her limited attempts at writing tragedies and critical social commentaries were not successful, though within even her comedies Cowley presents important cultural comments about British national identity.<sup>6</sup> This chapter suggests that Warren and Cowley's plays reflect their particular the social, cultural and political landscapes. Even though they wrote on different sides of the Atlantic, and even though what they wrote about was so very different, both Warren and Cowley understood the power that existed in social communication through Anglophone theatre, and the unique value of their feminine perspective on social commentary. Warren spoke of politics and the importance of creating a national American identity; Cowley spoke of social order and the place of women in British society. And yet, even though the topics they presented appear disparate, both Warren and Cowley presented their observations of contemporary society (in America and in Britain) and their work suggests that they valued women's social involvement and public engagement in helping to shape national identity.

Taking the playwrights in order of when they wrote, this chapter begins with an examination of Mercy Otis Warren's plays. First I explore the landscape of American theatre as

Warren began to write her plays and the unique position she was in as the daughter, sister, and wife of politically engaged men. Second, I examine the republican themes inherent within her first three political plays (*The Adulateur*, *The Defeat*, *The Group*) written and published on the cusp of the American Revolution between 1772 and 1775. Because the genre of Republican Classicism permeates Warren's work, I also introduce Joseph Addison's *Cato: a Tragedy* as a model for Warren's writing. I also explore how Republican Classicism provides an important thematic style for Revolutionary-Era American propaganda writing more generally. Rounding out Warren's plays with her last two dramas, I look briefly at the two historical tragedies she published in manuscript form (rather than serially in newspapers) in 1790.

After treating Warren's work, I examine the London theatrical environment that shaped Hannah Cowley's plays. Cowley's London audiences expected women to produce light-hearted comedies that presented social and political themes sensitively. What is also striking, in comparing the plays of Warren and Cowley is that even though Cowley wrote during the height of the American Revolution, she makes no overt mention of that particular conflict, suggesting

that London audiences were quite likely uninterested or too far removed from the war to care much about the people or its outcome. Thus, seemingly unconcerned with transnational political tensions sweeping through the Atlantic

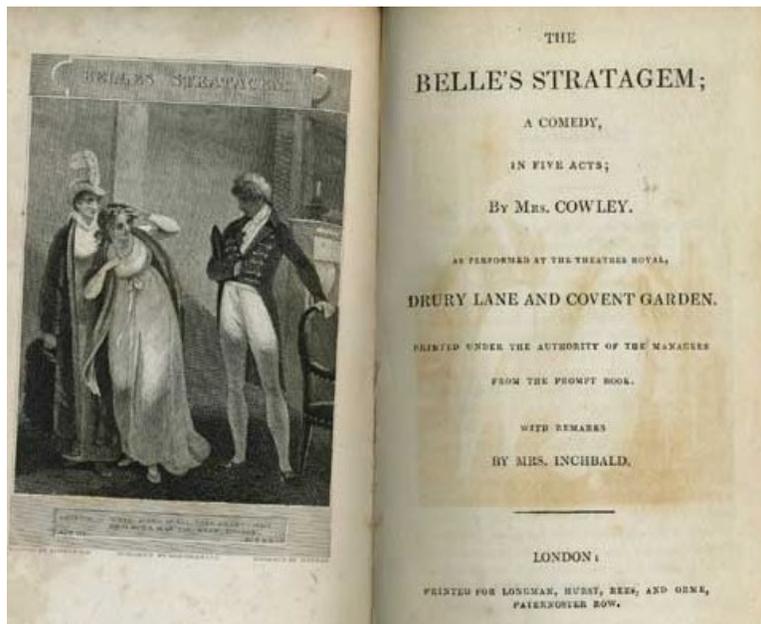


Figure 5.1 Title Page. Hannah Cowley, *The Belle's Stratagem* (London: Printed for Longman, Murray, Keen, and Orme, Paternoster Row).

world by 1776 when her first play appeared, Cowley's plays examine "safer" female topics such as marriage, family life, social customs, making it appear that she left political unrest or social criticism out of her plays almost entirely. Melinda Finberg does suggest, however, that "Cowley was swiftly censured for any attempts she made to emerge from her 'natural reserve' and succumbed to social pressures" that kept her from being more assertive or politically and socially critical.<sup>7</sup> For the most part Cowley kept within the confines of social expectations that women would write comedies because that is all they were capable of producing. Perhaps because women were so good at writing comedies that comedies appeared constantly on the eighteenth-century London stage (see Appendix: British Women Playwrights), with the frequent reproduction of the comedies written by Susanna Centlivre (*The Busy Body*, *A Bold Stroke for a Wife*, *The Wonder! A Woman Keeps a Secret*, *The Gamester*), Aphra Behn (*The Rover*, *Emperor of the Moon*), and new plays written by Hannah Cowley (*Who's the Dupe*, *The Belle's Stratagem*, *The Runaway*, *Which Is the Man?*), and Elizabeth Inchbald (*The Mogul Tale*, *The Midnight Hour*, *The Child of Nature*, *Such Things Are*, *I'll Tell You What*). Cowley's most successful play was the romantic comedy set in 1780s London, *The Belle's Stratagem*, (See Figure 5.2.1), which premiered in 1780.<sup>8</sup> Cowley's work, though it was so very different from Warren's polemical pieces, served as a form of national cultural diplomacy even though it was mostly comprised of light-hearted comedies. Her plays helped to establish what qualities in British society and culture were uniquely British and thus strengthened British identity.

My juxtaposition of these two women's plays is unique as a study but it is important to place their works side-by-side. The intention of this chapter is not to explore in depth the lives and experiences of these two women playwrights, as numerous excellent biographies already exist.<sup>9</sup> My purpose is instead to establish how these two successful authors used their dramatic works as a form of cultural diplomacy (intracolonial, transatlantic, transnational) to engage with local and international audiences during the Revolutionary Era. Neither Cowley nor Warren had

any theatrical training or experience performing before deciding to write for the theatre. In fact for both women, playwriting appears to be their first foray into public writing. It is likely that British playwright Hannah Cowley, a theatre-goer herself and the daughter of a well-established bookseller had access to published plays for her own literary models.<sup>10</sup> Warren, on the other hand, had very few theatrical encounters other than reading plays, since theatre was banned in and around Boston for most of her lifetime. This chapter also provides a significant opportunity for comparative consideration of women's plays from different transatlantic perspectives within the Revolutionary Era. To that end, I examine the pre-Revolutionary social, cultural and political landscapes in which Mercy Otis Warren wrote three of her political propaganda plays (*The Adulateur*, *The Defeat*, and *The Group*) and Hannah Cowley wrote her light-hearted social comedies (*The Runaway*, *Who's the Dupe?*, *The Belle's Strategem*, and *A Bold Stroke for a Husband*). While Warren explored political events brewing in America in her plays, Cowley examined contemporary British social customs, particularly marriage and women's roles in British society.



Figure 5.2 Mercy Otis Warren, John Singley Copley, ca. 1763. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Accession Number 31.212.

### **Mercy Otis Warren and the Politics of Pre-Revolutionary War America**

On 1 July 1791, Alexander Hamilton wrote to Mercy Otis Warren;

Madam,—In making you, thus late, my acknowledgements for the honor you did me, by presenting me with a volume of your poems, I dare not attempt an apology for the delay. I can only throw myself upon your clemency for a pardon. I have not however been equally delinquent towards the work itself, which I have read, more than once, with great interest. It is certain that in the Ladies of

Castille, the sex will find a new occasion of triumph. *Not being a poet myself, I am in the less danger of feeling mortification at the idea, that in the career of dramatic composition at least, female genius in the United States has outstripped the Male.* [emphasis mine] With great consideration and esteem I have the honor to be, Madam, Your most obedt and humble Servant,

A. Hamilton<sup>11</sup>

As the First Secretary of the Treasury for the United States (1789-1795), Hamilton was not only in a position of political power when he wrote to Warren, he was a writer himself. Hamilton contributed 51 of the 85 installments in the *Federalist Papers* placing him in an appropriate position to judge the effectiveness political writing. That he complimented Warren and argued that the “female genius in the United States has outstripped the Male” [note female not capitalized and Male capitalized] suggests just how important Warren’s writings were as works of political, historical, and cultural significance. Literary scholar Nina Baym identifies Warren as the only woman “Among the many Massachusetts intellectuals who wrote to support the patriot cause before and during the American Revolution.”<sup>12</sup> Further, Baym argues that “Warren’s two ways of gendering women--as powerless public bodies and as powerful private minds” were compatible given the social and cultural demands and expectations enforced for men and women in eighteenth century American society.<sup>13</sup>

Mercy Otis Warren (Figure 5.4.2.) is now recognized as the author of three anonymously published political plays, *The Adulateur* (1772), *The Defeat* (1773), and *The Group* (1775), and two later dramatic works, *The Sack of Rome* and *The Ladies of Castille* that were published together in a volume with poems in 1790 called, *Poems, Dramatic and Miscellaneous*, the publication to which Hamilton refers in his comments above.<sup>14</sup> Each of Warren’s three earliest plays was published serially in local newspapers during the 1770s but none of the plays were performed publicly, nor, does it seem, did Warren intend for these plays to be performed. Rather, because plays were widely read, discussed, and exchanged during this period, publishing her work in newspapers allowed for intercolonial transmission of her ideas and helped to craft a more

unified “American” national identity by suggesting that when one colony suffered, all colonies suffered under British rule.<sup>15</sup>

### **Warren’s World: Pre-Revolutionary War Boston and Theatre**

The location in which Warren was raised, near Boston, Massachusetts, had a long-standing and contentious history with theatre. In 1687, John Wing made an unsuccessful attempt to start a theater in his tavern. He met with strong resistance from Reverend Increase Mather and Judge Samuel Sewall and his efforts to open the first known theatre in Boston floundered. In 1750 an amateur group staged Thomas Otway’s comedy, *The Orphan* at the Coffee House on King Street (now State Street) in Boston. In reaction, an anti-theatre crowd assembled, fights broke out and a melee ensued. The result of which was the Massachusetts General Court forbid the production or staging of live performances in the Commonwealth for over forty years until 1793 when the Federal Street Theatre opened. This initial anti-theatre ruling in 1750 led to conflicts between American colonists who equated theatre with British decadence and British troops quartered in the city during the Revolutionary period who were eager for theatrical entertainments to quell the boredom of wartime inactivity.<sup>16</sup>

Following the theatre ban in Massachusetts, the Second Continental Congress issued a colonial-wide theatre ban in 1774. In reaction to this later theatre ban, Loyalists spoke out vehemently against this infringement on their right to choose entertainments and pointed out the irony of new American governmental limitations and control. New York printer, James Rivington (1724-1802), publisher of the Loyalist newspaper, *Rivington’s Gazette*, circulated several pro-theatre commentaries in *The Poor Man’s Advice to his Poor Neighbors* and in *A Dialogue between a Southern Delegate and his Spouse n His Return from the Grand Continental Congress. A Fragment. Inscribed to the Married Ladies of America* (1774). In this sarcastic *Dialogue*, a man

mocks his wife's novel reading and attendance of plays, stating, "You've been heating your Brain with Romance and Plays, / Such Rant and Bombast I never heard in my Days."<sup>17</sup> The wife's response reflects Rivington's own royalist leanings as she rails against her husband's patriotic affinity, "Were your new-fangled Doctrines, as modest and true, / 'Twould be well for yourselves and your poor Country too."<sup>18</sup> Rivington (at least at the onset of the events leading to the American Revolution) remained loyal to the king and made it publicly known he saw the Continental Congress's theatre ban as a form of tyranny.

Daniel O'Quinn in his study of London theatre, *Staging Governance: Theatrical Imperialism in London, 1770-1800* (2005), suggests that "theatrical productions enact governance and, in so doing, both discipline and regulate the audience."<sup>19</sup> Such views imply that the Continental Congress 1774 ban on theatre may have been more insightful than previously recognized in limiting British influence on the emerging (and increasingly cohesive) American ideology and identity. British theatre during the last three decades of the eighteenth century, as O'Quinn argues, became a mode through which "the object of the performance is the consolidation of the audience" that was told to identify itself within the parameters of a racially unified nation.<sup>20</sup> Ironically, this imperialistic technique of forcing a cultural identity on its audience through British theatre—whether in London or in America—was a technique that Americans later employed when they began to use theatre to establish their own national identity post-revolution in creating new "American" characters, and in commenting on new "American" social, cultural, and political issues.

O'Quinn suggests, "Between 1770 and 1800, transformations in the relationship between metropolitan British society and its colonial holdings as well as changes in the concept of the nation itself, precipitated crises in governance that left Britons with a new sense of themselves... although economically the nation and the empire were mutually constitutive, that was not the case politically."<sup>21</sup> Further, O'Quinn posits that "one can track important shifts in governmentality in

the theatricalization of imperial affairs in late eighteenth-century London.”<sup>22</sup> O’Quinn uses Michel Foucault’s idea of governmentality (“the ensemble of the institutions, procedures, analyses, and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has as its target population, as its principal form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security”) in order to suggest just how powerful theatricality was in British imperial governance.<sup>23</sup> Thus just as Grier emphasized the importance of theatre as a space for economic exchange as discussed in the previous chapter, O’Quinn emphasizes the idea that “theatre distilled the social forces of imperial life in London and presented it on a nightly basis.”<sup>24</sup> I agree that theatre as a form of cultural exchange did involve economic exchanges (both politically and on a daily basis) since members of the audience or readers of plays were indeed consumers, and that the temporality of these exchanges could and did change regularly as O’Quinn suggests. But also I would argue that these cultural exchanges carried more meaning for American colonists several thousand miles removed from London’s stages than they did for London theatre-goers. This made transatlantic performances significant moments of cultural exchange that depended upon performers presenting contemporary pieces that suggested how colonists could and should act, purchase, speak, or engage publicly as Britons physically removed from but culturally connected to the metropole. In addition, I suggest actresses and women playwrights enacted significant cultural diplomacy during the second half of the eighteenth century that dispersed Anglo cultural transatlantically and established a cohesive socio-cultural connection between American colonists and Britons in England. O’Quinn argues importantly that “theatre tends to bridge the conceptual gap between realms understood to be explicitly political or economic and those understood to be specifically private and social.”<sup>25</sup> Even following the American Revolution, Americans looked to British theatre to help them reconsider how to publicly engage politically, socially and culturally, and Hannah Cowley’s social comedies, for example, *Who’s the Dupe?* (1779), *The Belle’s*

*Stratagem* (1780), *Which Is the Man?* (1782), *A Bold Stroke for a Husband* (1783), *More Ways than One* (1784), appeared on the Philadelphia stage for a total of twenty-six performances during the 1790s.<sup>26</sup> While Chapters Three and Four of this work addressed the place of theatre in pre-revolutionary America, this chapter section examines how Anglophone theatre worked in revolutionary America and at Mercy Otis Warren's contributions to American Theatre and explores her plays as cultural *intercolonial* diplomacy rather than transatlantic diplomacy.

### **Pre-Revolutionary American Theatre**

Theatre in America during the first half of the eighteenth century largely depended on the plays of British playwrights. Very few plays were written and published by individuals either born or raised in America before the American Revolution and almost all of those works were written by men.<sup>27</sup> One of the few exceptions to these early male-authored plays were those written by Charlotte Ramsay Lennox (1730-1804), a woman who had lived in America, but whose plays were published and performed in London after she moved there as a young woman. Born in Gibraltar, Lennox was the daughter of lieutenant-governor of New York province, Colonel James Ramsey.<sup>28</sup> What might be considered the first "American" play, was a play called *The Prince of Parthia*, written by Thomas Godfrey in 1767. In an attempt to produce a true American drama, on April 24, 1767, the American Company hastily put together a production of Godfrey's blank-verse tragedy in an attempt to replace (ironically) the first opera written by an American, *The Disappointment, or, The Force of Credulity* (1767), written under the pseudonym of "Andrew Barton."<sup>29</sup> Barton's *Disappointment* could not be performed, according to the *Gazette* "as it contains personal reflections...unfit for the stage."<sup>30</sup> These unfit personal reflections come by way of satirizing and mocking King George and criticizing several prominent Philadelphia

citizens, both reasons legitimate enough for Douglass to change his mind about producing such a controversial, if timely, piece.<sup>31</sup>

While Barton's work, *The Disappointment*, was not staged as the first American-written piece, its appearance in print and the fact that it was advertised first in newspapers reflects how Americans were beginning to define their own identity by enacting British cultural forms. Barton's play further suggests the emergence of transatlantic imperial political ideology and why, perhaps, his views may have caused Douglass to question the play's acceptance. Instead of producing such a controversial piece, Douglass chose Thomas Godfrey's *Prince of Parthia* in an attempt to provide the local audience with a locally produced work, and yet perhaps because of the inexperience of American authors, evidence suggests that the play failed to impress Philadelphia theatre-goers regardless of the author's "American" origins.<sup>32</sup> By the late 1760s, outbreaks of revolutionary fervor, both pro-British and pro-colonial, created riots in streets throughout colonial America. Theatre could be explicitly political and often provoked debate; at times this revolutionary fervor made its way into American theatres and theatre programs had taken to asking that "Ruffians in the Gallery" cease these "Outrages." Unfortunately, not everyone who attended plays read the programs or heeded these warnings to behave civilly. As war approached, colonists in North America began to distrust acting companies such as the American Company that employed almost exclusively British actors, performed predominantly British plays, and some thought, acted to subvert "American" values. Eventually, acting companies like the American Company left for friendlier venues. Many spent several years in the Caribbean performing for more sympathetic audiences who were less socially restricted about engaging with theatre, identified closely with British social elites (considering the majority of theatre-goers in the British Caribbean were plantation owners and persons of property rather than of the middling or lower classes), and who were ultimately less willing to cut off ties with Britain

and less eager to call out British governance which might leave them unprotected and isolated from the rest of the British empire.<sup>33</sup>

In 1772, the American Company was interrupted by a political riot just outside the theatre doors while performing in Philadelphia. It was also in 1772 that the first political play *The Adulateur* by Mercy Otis Warren, was published in the weekly political paper with Whig leanings, *The Massachusetts Spy*. A year later in 1773, *The Adulateur* appeared in pamphlet form, more easily distributed transcolonially, the same year that her second play, *The Defeat* appeared in the *Boston Gazette* published serially between 24 May and 19 July. Warren's polemical works attempted to stir up pro-colonial sentiments, ensure that republican virtue became a unifying cause, and craft a cohesive socio-political sense of colonial cohesion. The publication of her plays in newspapers established a form of American cultural interconnectedness that could be read and discussed both privately and publicly, and used British cultural forms to do so.

### **Republicanism and Mercy Otis Warren's Propaganda Plays as Cultural Diplomacy**

It is often easy, when discussing women's writing from this early period, to suggest that women wrote for hobby, to support their families, or purely to entertain rather than to inform or defend a political or social cause. Warren's work and the overwhelming support she received from her well-placed friends, suggests otherwise.<sup>34</sup> While Warren may have been limited or constricted by rigid social expectations of wives and women in late eighteenth-century Anglo society, particularly in the more conservative New England Region, she actively chose to engage in public political and social discourse. Even in the midst of raising her five young sons (born between 1757 and 1766), Warren chose to take up her pen to deride the British crown in an effort to rally support for the colonial cause. Within three years (1772-1775) she authored *The Adulateur* (1772), *The Defeat* (1773), and *The Group* (1775), and two decades later in 1790,

Warren published a collection of poems and two dramatic tragedies that continued to warn Americans to beware of corrupt leaders, *The Sack of Rome* and *The Ladies of Castille*.

The rural community of West Barnstable, Massachusetts during the 1770s in which Warren lived, was fraught with social and political debates. Warren's world was surrounded by well-educated, civilly engaged individuals, who used classical references in their political debates. Many Massachusetts residents, particularly those living near America's first college, Harvard, (established in 1636), were classically trained.<sup>35</sup> Even though publicly staged performances in Boston remained unpopular (even unlawful) before the 1790s, Americans regularly read and discussed published plays in their print form; their small size and easily quotable dialogue made them good travel companions that circulated widely. While live performances were seen as decadent or as indulgent Tory entertainment, published plays were viewed as legitimate, even essential, literature. Indeed, some of America's most influential military and political figures invoked theatre as a metaphor for life in their speeches. For example, on 11 June 1783, George Washington wrote in his last Circular to the States;

The Citizens of America, placed in the most enviable condition, as the sole Lords and Proprietors of a vast tract of Continent, comprehending all the various soils and climates of the World, and abounding with all the necessaries and conveniences of life, are now, by the late satisfactory pacification, acknowledged to be possessed of absolute Freedom and Independency; *They are from this period to be considered as the Actors on a most conspicuous Theatre, which seems to be peculiarly designated by Providence, for the display of human greatness and felicity* [emphasis mine]...<sup>36</sup>

Washington's understanding that post-Revolution, America and Americans would be observed, criticized and displayed for all the world to watch like actors on a stage suggests just how much theatre had seeped into the consciousness of Americans. This was the world in which Warren lived conventionally as a wife and mother and unconventionally as an outspoken, civic-minded, and respected member of her community.

Early American historian Rosemarie Zagarri insists that initially, Warren tried to resist the pull of politics suggesting that in 1766 she wrote a poem for her husband, James Warren,

entitled, “To J. Warren Esqr” in which she urged her husband to “Come leave the noisy smoky town / Where vice and folly reign. / The vain pursuits of busy men / We wisely will disdain.”<sup>37</sup>

Ray Raphael argues that John Adams encouraged Warren to “use her facility with verse to benefit their shared cause.”<sup>38</sup> Raphael argues further that “Warren was no modern feminist. She did not promote woman suffrage, but she did foster and model women’s participation in the body politic through promulgation of virtue in the public arena.”<sup>39</sup> In spite of what might have been earlier attempts to distance herself from a political life, Warren engaged in a public political dialogue with her friends and acquaintances. Some of these individuals, like Hamilton and John Adams, encouraged her to use her writing for their shared cause. For example, on 8 January 1776, Adams wrote to Warren, complimenting her on her play and suggesting that she was Adams’ equal in discussing political ideology,

I was charmed with three Characters drawn by a most masterly Pen, which I received at the southward. Copeleys Pencil could not touched off, with more exquisite Finishings, the Faces of those Gentlemen. Whether I ever answered that Letter I know not. But I hope Posterity will see it, if they do I am sure they will admire it. I think I will make a Bargain with you, to draw the Character of every new Personage I have an opportunity of knowing, on Condition you will do the same. My View will be to learn the Art of penetrating into Mens Bosoms, and then the more difficult Art of painting what I shall see there. You Ladies are the most infallible judges of Characters, I think. Pray Madam, are you for an American Monarchy or Republic? Monarchy is the genteelest and most fashionable Government, and I dont know why the Ladies ought not to consult Elegance and the Fashion as well in Government as Gowns, Bureaus or Chariots.

For my own Part, I am so tasteless as to prefer a Republic, if We must erect an independent Government in America, which you know is utterly against my Inclination. But a Republic, altho it will infallibly beggar me and my Children, will produce Strength, Hardiness Activity Courage Fortitude and Enterprice; the manly, noble and Sublime Qualities in human Nature, in Abundance.

A Monarchy would probably, somehow or other make me rich, but it would produce So much Taste and Politeness, So much Elegance in Dress, Furniture, Equipage, So much Musick and Dancing, So much Fencing and Skaiting; So much Cards and Backgammon; so much Horse Racing and Cock fighting; so many Balls and Assemblies, so many Plays and Concerts that the very Imagination of them makes me feel vain, light, frivolous and insignificant [emphasis mine].<sup>40</sup>

This reference to theatre and public performances in relation to Monarchy suggests that Adams is against plays as performances but not as literature. Later on 16 April 1776, Adams again wrote,

The Ladies I think are the greatest Politicians, that I have the Honour to be acquainted with, not only because they act upon the Sublimest of all the Principles of Policy, vizt. the Honesty is the best Policy but because they consider Questions more coolly than those who are heated with Party Zeal, and inflamed with the bitter Contentions of active, public Life.<sup>41</sup>

Adams continued,

Every Man must seriously set himself to root out his Passions, Prejudices and Attachments, and to get the better of his private Interest. The only reputable Principle and Doctrine must be that all Things must give Way to the public.

This is very grave and solemn Discourse to a Lady. True, and I thank God, that his Providence has made me Acquainted with two Ladies at least, who can bear it [emphasis mine].

I think Madam, that the Union of the Colonies, will continue and be more firmly cemented, But We must move slowly. Patience, Patience, Patience! I am obliged to invoke thee every Morning of my Life, every Noon, and every Evening.<sup>42</sup>

Again, Adams confided in Warren while that such serious political conversations might have been uncommon to share with a woman, he believed in the ability of both Warren and his wife to understand. Adams and Warren would not always see eye to eye, however, and during Adam's presidency, she was critical of his administration, which would eventually lead to a rift between them.

While she engaged in these political conversations through letters, one event in particular may have prompted Warren into more vocal action. In September 1769, customs official (and obvious Tory supporter) John Robinson and his cohorts brutally beat Warren's brother, James Otis. Once a brilliant speaker and outspoken activist, James Otis would never be the same and would eventually slip into mental instability. As mother to five young sons, it was not practical for Warren to travel to assist her brother or his family at that moment, so instead of rushing off to be with him, she took up her pen, an act she seemed rather accustomed to doing, and wrote him a letter of support, encouragement and hope; "Dear Brother, You know not what I have suffered for you within the last twenty four hours—I saw you fallen—slain by the hands of merciless men,—I saw your wife a widow, your children orphans, your friends weeping round you, and your country

in tears for the man who had sacrificed interest, health, and peace, for the public weal.”<sup>43</sup> It is possible that without the incapacitation of James Otis on that September night in 1769, Mercy Otis Warren may have remained silent, keeping her political opinions and propaganda plays condemning the British government to herself.<sup>44</sup>

Jeffrey Richards and Shannon Harris suggest that to classify Warren’s great accomplishments as a revolutionary author—both in her private correspondences and her publications—simply as a result of the physical weakness caused by her brother James Otis’s beating does Warren an injustice.<sup>45</sup> I argue along with Richards and Harris that we should consider Warren an active participant in the political discussions surrounding revolutionary ideology at the time she wrote her plays. The effect of James’ beating on Warren was undeniably significant. In addition to her brother’s beating, Warren’s observations of the imposition of British restrictions on colonial life further influenced her to speak out. The British Parliament’s 1765 Stamp Act led to several riots in Boston led by the Sons of Liberty (including James Otis and Joseph Warren) and culminated in the Boston Massacre on 5 March 1770, bringing to the fore the discontent many residents of Massachusetts felt for what they considered to be the oppressive British presence. Because she was educated alongside her brother with the very best tutors and because she grew up near the volatile pre-revolutionary landscape, and in a politically-minded family, it is not surprising that Warren understood patriotic rhetoric. She quickly crafted her three plays within a three year period and chose to publish her work serially in newspapers where they would be read in coffeehouses, travel transcolonially, and stir up public pro-colonial pro-national sentiments, albeit anonymously. Warren’s continued involvement with political discourse before, during, and after the Revolution, and the admiration and respect she received from her friends and acquaintances for her intellectual views, (including John and Abigail Adams, Alexander Hamilton, and English historian Catherine Macaulay), all reinforce the notion

that Warren should be granted active authority in the authorship of her plays and other historical and political writings.

The overwhelming emergence of American print culture focusing on civil liberties during the pre-revolutionary period was extraordinary. As Heidi Brayman Hackel and Catherine E. Kelly suggest, “The imperial crisis of the 1760s and 1770s forever changed the female world of classicism by giving it a newly politicized, republican edge.”<sup>46</sup> In addition, Heckel and Kelly argue that “The American Revolution gave women’s classicism in America a newly politicized edge that helped them to envision themselves as proper subjects of republicanism.”<sup>47</sup> The idea of female classicism, the type of rhetoric in which Warren engaged, involves looking at how classical literature and republican rhetoric became increasingly part of female dialogue. As a well-educated and politically engaged member of an outspoken Whig family capable of “righteous anger,” Warren had the training, intellectual capability and the confidence, along with public support and encouragement, for her to write polemical works that publicly (albeit anonymously) censured the British government and called for revolutionary changes.<sup>48</sup> If her particular experiences and circumstances influenced *why* Warren chose to publish her work, I argue that Republicanized classicism heavily influence *what* Warren wrote.

The Ancient Roman settings and republican themes that appear in Warren’s plays can be examined as being taken straight from *Cato*. Addison’s play produced revolutionary rhetoric employed by Americans throughout the colonies as they sought to become independent from Britain. Even her later plays published after the Revolution, *The Ladies of Castille* and *The Sack of Rome*, (particularly the latter), maintained the Roman setting and continued to intertwine lessons of history and morality. In fact, Warren asserts her familiarity with *Cato* and its importance to her work by quoting from Addison’s play on the title page of her first play, *The Adulateur* when it appeared as a manuscript published in Boston in 1793:

Then let us rise my friends, and strive to fill  
This little interval, this pause of life,

(While yet our liberty and fates are doubtful)  
With resolution, friendship, Roman bravery,  
And all the virtues we can crowd into it;  
That Heaven may say it ought to be prolonged.<sup>49</sup>

Since Warren in essence dedicates her first play to *Cato* (See Figure 5.3) by invoking it on her title page, it makes sense to look briefly at Addison's tragedy and how it became an essential component of America's political rhetoric in order to understand Warren's plays as both as propaganda literature and as acts of cultural diplomacy.

Addison's five-act tragedy, *Cato*, examines the fate of the main character, Marcus Portius Cato the Younger, a Roman aristocrat and republican, who opposes Julius Caesar's rise to power. Cato tries to gain Roman support for rejecting Caesar and unsuccessfully seeks for support for a return to traditional republican virtues.

Disheartened but not defeated, Cato retreats to Utica in North Africa and attempts to overthrow Caesar from a distance. Supporting their cause to defeat Caesar and restore the Republic with talk of liberty, (echoing America's cause for distancing itself from Britain and suggesting why Addison's play was popular there), Sempronius ponders, "what is life? / 'Tis not to stalk about, and draw fresh air / From time to time, or gaze upon the sun; / 'Tis to be free. When liberty is gone, / Life grows insipid."<sup>50</sup> The invocation of liberty again arises when

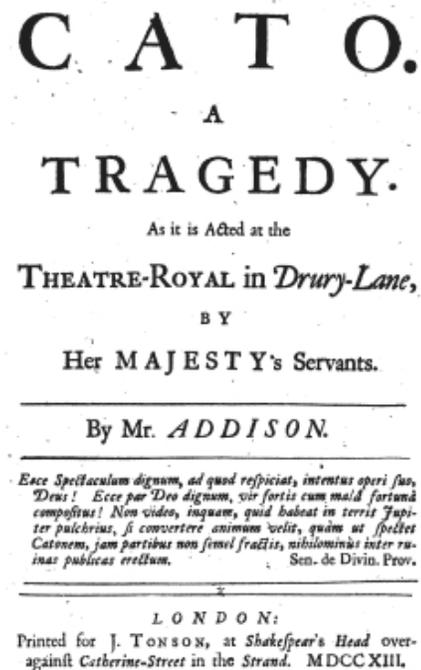


Figure 5.3 Joseph Addison, *Cato; a Tragedy. As it is Acted at the Theatre-Royal Drury Lane, by Her Majesty's Servants* (London: J. Tonson, 1713), <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/2338>

Cato opines, “Do thou, great Liberty, inspire our souls, / And make our lives in thy possession happy, / Or our deaths glorious in thy just defence [sic].”<sup>51</sup> Later presented with the mutilated corpse of his son, Cato cries out, “How beautiful is death, when earn’d by virtue! / Who would not be that youth? What pity is it / That we can die but once to serve our country.”<sup>52</sup> Such language is clearly reflected in the political discourse of the Revolutionary Era. These words are echoed in those of Captain Nathan Hale, who, as he faced the British hangman for spying in 1776, is reputed to have uttered, “I regret that I have but one life to lose for my country.” Cato’s appeal to republican ideals such as, “It is not now time to talk of aught / But chains or conquest, liberty or death,”<sup>53</sup> are likewise reflected in Patrick Henry’s supposed speech to the Virginia Convention in 1775, in which he raged, “Give me liberty, or give me death!”<sup>54</sup>

In the end Cato chooses suicide over surrender, a choice that reflects his staunch allegiance to traditional republican ideals and his willingness to make the ultimate sacrifice for a virtuous cause. *Cato* was one of Britain’s most popular exported plays and was staged over two hundred times in London alone during the eighteenth century and saw over two dozen published editions. Both Whigs and Tories in Britain claimed the play for their own and even Benjamin Franklin invoked *Cato* in his autobiography, writing, “This my little book had for its motto these lines from Addison’s *Cato*: Here will I hold. If there’s a power above us (And that there is, all nature cries aloud Thro’ all her works), He must delight in virtue; And that which He delights in must be happy.”<sup>55</sup> Indeed, so popular in America was Cato himself, that the name even made its way ironically into slave culture, as suggested in Jonathan Dickinson’s note to John Adams in 1776, “Meantime the Catos (Cato You know is the common name of a Negro-Slave in Modern Times) will keep us in play talking about it and about it ‘till the Spirit of the People will evaporate or those blessed Commissioners will have Time to play their pranks.”<sup>56</sup> In addition, a collection of essays, titled, *Cato’s Letters* (1720-1723) by British authors John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon between 1720 and 1723 found a widespread and eager audience in America. Like

Addison's play, *Cato's Letters* enamored colonial readers and Mark Kamrath argues that "More than any other literature of the Enlightenment, *Cato's Letters* traversed the colonies through traditional methods of idea diffusion and communication. *Cato's Letters* [a collection of essays on civil liberties and the moral conduct of a just government printed as *Essays on Liberty, Civil and Religious* written] would repeatedly emerge from the colonies' printing presses."<sup>57</sup> The essays were published between 1721 and 1723 in four volumes and they were distributed in newspapers, pamphlets and brochures throughout America.

The use of *Cato* during the American Revolution suggests both the level of its influential literal and performative power for American audiences and just how the play came to stand for idealized Republican Classicism. On 11 May 1778, at the end of a hard winter in Valley Forge, George Washington staged Addison's *Cato* (1713), reputed to be his favorite play, in spite of the 1774 ban on theatre enacted by the Continental Congress.<sup>58</sup> Colonel William Bradford, recently named official printer of the First Continental Congress, wrote to his sister on 14 May,

the Theatre is opened—Last Monday *Cato* was performed before a very numerous & splendid audience...The scenery was in Taste--& the performance admirable...If the Enemy does not retire from Philadelphia soon, our Theatrical amusements will continue—The fair Penitent with the Padlock will soon be acted. The "recruiting officer" is also on foot. I hope however we shall be disappointed in all these by the more agreeable Entertainment of taking possession of Philadelphia—There are strong rumors that the English are meditating a retreat...<sup>59</sup>

While Bradford might have preferred taking back Philadelphia from the British to idly watching British plays, he reveals that a "very numerous & splendid audience" attended the show even though it was performed at a military camp, "the performance [of *Cato*] was admirable" and "The scenery was in Taste." Additional plays planned for the soldiers of Valley Forge that season included three of the most popular and memorable plays (because of specific characters) of the eighteenth century: Nicholas Rowe's *The Fair Penitent*, (1703), a domestic tragedy featuring that heartless libertine Lothario; Charles Didbin's two-act after-piece, *The Padlock* (1768) that had recently debuted at the Drury Lane Theatre and featured the black-faced character, the greedy

servant Mungo who spoke with a West-Indian slave dialect; and *The Recruiting Officer* (1706), a comedy by George Farquhar (who had been a recruiting officer himself) featuring cross-dressing, a fortune-teller, and that followed the philandering exploits of two officers, the womanizer and appropriately named Captain Plume and the [ironically] cowardly Captain Brazen. The theatrical season was not to last long and on 20 May Bradford wrote again to his sister that war trumped entertainment; “All is hurry and bustle—our plays and other amusements seem to be laid aside.”<sup>60</sup> By 18 June 1778 the British abandoned Philadelphia and Bradford’s wish for “the more agreeable Entertainment of taking possession of Philadelphia” came to fruition.

*Cato* might have been staged in Valley Forge on 11 May 1778 to rally the troops with its republican ideology, but the play could also easily have been staged for the officers as an emblem of gentility and cultural elitism.<sup>61</sup> In fact, Washington’s choice to stage *Cato* may have been for personal reasons related to recent stabs at his integrity and character since it reflects undertones of the recent “Conway cabal,” conspiracy of 1777, a conspiracy that involved a small group of secret plotters who aimed to discredit Washington and replace him with General Horatio Gates. The conspiracy came about after a series of military defeats in 1777, prompting members of Congress to express their displeasure with Washington’s leadership. Thomas Conway, who had participated in several of these battles, wrote a series of letters critical of Washington. Simply attending *Cato*’s performance, staged just a few months following the conspiracy allowed Washington to make a covert statement to his enemies as to who was the better man, allowing the play to serve as a form of cultural *and* political diplomacy. Emphasizing this point, poet Jonathan Mitchel Sewall wrote a new epilogue for the production in which he linked Washington with Cato, Lafayette with Juba, and King George with Caesar. Sewall wrote; “Our senate, too, the same bold deed has done, / And for a Cato, arm’d a WASHINGTON! / A chief in all the ways of battle skill’d / Great in the council, glorious in the field.”<sup>62</sup> Clearly theatre as popular culture influenced colonial interactions and resonated within political and cultural discourse.

*Cato* even made its way into personal correspondances. In 1773, Abigail Adams wrote to Mercy Otis Warren, suggesting that while the brutal beating of her brother James may have motivated her initially to speak out against what she felt was the tyrannical treatment of colonial America by Britain, she recognized that Joseph Addison's play, *Cato: A Tragedy* first performed in London in 1713, influenced the content and style of her plays. In July 1780, Benjamin Rush wrote to John Adams (invoking the character of Cato), "'The Romans govern the world (said Cato) but the women govern the Romans.' The women of America have at last become principals in the glorious American Controversy. Their opinions alone and their transcendent influence in Society and families must lead us on to Success and victory."<sup>63</sup> And in 1783 John Adams wrote to his wife Abigail praising Cato's ambitions (read Patriots) as more sublime than Caesar's (read King George III);

Liberty and Virtue! When! oh When will your Ennemies [sic] cease to exist or to persecute! Our Country will be envied, our Liberty will be envied, our Virtues will be envied. Deep and subtle systems of Corruption hard to prove, impossible to detect, will be practised to sap and undermine Us and the few who penetrate them will be called suspicious, envious, restless turbulent ambitious—will be hated unpopular and unhappy.

But a Succession of these Men must be preserved, for these are the salt of the Earth. Without these the World would be worse than it is. Is not this after all the noblest Ambition. Such Ambition is Virtue. Cato will never be Consull but Catos Ambition was sublimer than Caesars, and his Glory and even his Catastrophy more desirable.<sup>64</sup>

Addison's *Cato* was one of the most popular plays read and discussed in America (in fact it was staged for colonial troops at Valley Forge on 11 May 1778 by orders from George Washington), given its republican themes and call for rebellion against a despotic ruler. Men and women discussed this type of republican revolutionary ideology in the decades leading up to Revolution and as Heckel and Kelly suggest, "republican revolution also catapulted certain strands of women's classicism into the realm of political symbolism. Women's republicanized classicism gave them a voice with which to articulate some of American women's first political questions about their place in the new Republic."<sup>65</sup> Zoe Detsi-Diamanti suggests that "What distinguishes [Warren's] plays from the rest of the propaganda dramas of the time is the fact that Warren's

republican language is not only used to explain history and politics, to comment and ridicule, but also serves as the space where the republican ethics of virtue met the traditional role of women as the “moral pillars of society.”<sup>66</sup> Indeed, by adhering to principles addressed in *Cato* and by invoking Republican classicism in her plays, Warren helped give voice to the Republican cause.

### Warren’s First Play: *The Adulateur*

Warren’s first play, *The Adulateur* appeared in serial form in the local patriotic newspaper the *Massachusetts Spy* from 26 March to 23 April 1772. The following year in 1773, *The Adulateur* appeared as a pamphlet in Boston (See Figure 5.3.2). The play’s action reflects contemporary events and culminates in the Boston Massacre, an event that took place on 5 March 1770, two years before. Nina Baym directly addresses Warren’s involvement with revolutionary ideology but reminds us that “Among the many Massachusetts intellectuals who wrote to support the patriot cause before and during the American Revolution, Warren was the only woman.”<sup>67</sup> Baym’s stance is that it was natural for women to become

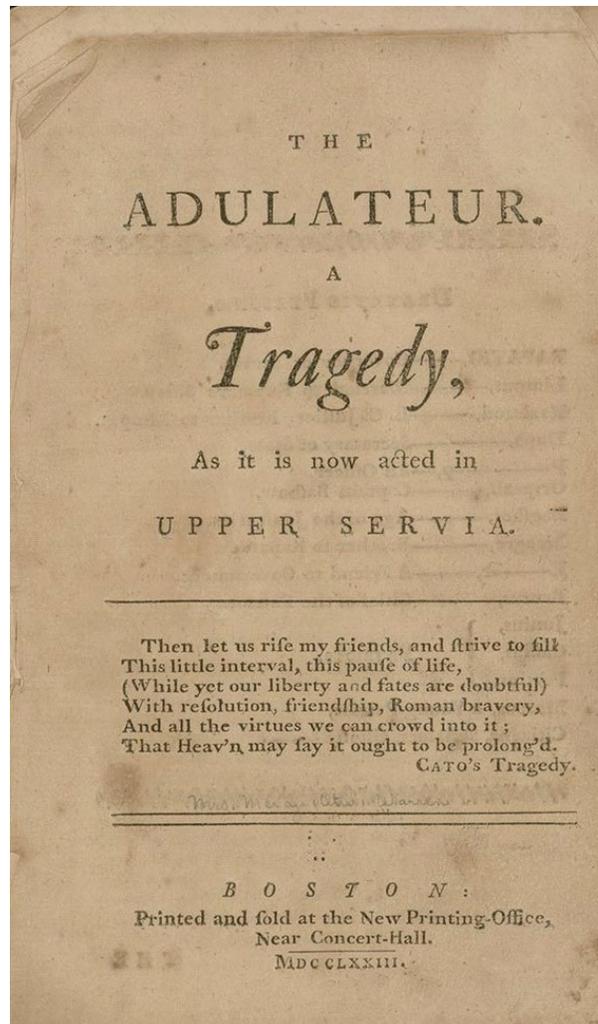


Figure 5.4 Mercy Otis Warren, *The Adulateur*, 1774. Rare Books and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress, (15.00.04) [Digital ID# us15p4].

involved with political discourse during the American Revolution because, “If the Revolution had been fought exclusively on the battlefield it might have remained beyond women’s scope. But since it came home from the start to women, they were virtually obliged to think and speak out about it.”<sup>68</sup> Indeed, Baym sees that Warren addressed gendered ideas of public participation and suggests that “Warren relates gender to politics as a means of dismissing any consensus that deviates from strict republican principles; gender representation becomes a tool to prevent compromise, not encourage it. She has no interest in transcending party sentiment if one party is republican and the other is not.”<sup>69</sup> While Baym almost exclusively addresses Warren’s *History* rather than her plays, the same arguments can be applied to Warren’s motivation for writing and the context in which she wrote. Warren certainly did more than think and speak about Revolution; she continued to engage in republican ideology post-Revolution, questioning the formation of the American government and challenging views of what the newly emerged American nation might become.<sup>70</sup>

Most tellingly, Warren suggested in 1790, both how she embraced the traditional female role she recognized in herself and how she desired to contribute publicly to the new nation’s moral improvement by trying to “throw a mite into the scale of virtue” through her dramatic contributions. In her Preface to *The Sack of Rome*, Warren wrote;

While the extensive dominions of that once celebrated nation, their haughty usurpations and splendid crimes, have for ages furnished the historian and the poet with a field of speculation, adapted to his own peculiar talents. But if the writer of the Sack of Rome has mistaken her's, she will, doubtless, be forgiven, as there have been instances of men of the best abilities who have fallen into the same error.

There is but little mixture of fable in the narration, and, I hope, a just purity of stile has been observed, while the writer has aimed at moral improvement, by an exhibition of the tumult and misery into which mankind are often plunged by an unwarrantable indulgence of the discordant passions of the human mind.<sup>71</sup>

Warren, born and raised near Boston where public performances had been banned since 1750, acknowledged first that theatre might be considered a vice (potentially linked with prostitution), but also that in the age of refinement one might be morally informed through plays. Second,

Warren argued that she wished (publicly not anonymously) to “meet the approbation of the judicious and the worthy” and have her work accepted by the “candid public.” Recognizing in herself, perhaps the image of the “historian and the poet,” (and a great admirer of Catherine Macaulay) Warren’s use of theatre to inform and entertain colonists about what she believed was an oppressive British monarchy actually makes a strong a cultural connection between America and Britain just as it seeks to establish connections intracoloniaally.<sup>72</sup>

In February 1773, after the publication of her first play and possibly while she was preparing her second play, *The Defeat*, for publication in the *Boston Gazette*, Warren wrote to her friend, Hannah Fayerwether Tolman Winthrop, claiming limited talents as an author and justifying her desire to share her writings with her friend (and by association, with the public);

my dear madam prone as are my sex (and indeed all mankind) to *vanity*; I never [?] entertained so chimerical an idea as to suppose it in my power greatly to amuse;--much less to benefit the world by the unstudied composition of my leisure hours...I am sensible *the world is already full of elegant productions that entertain the imagination and refine the taste* [emphasis mine]; yet perhaps the world so little reformed even by the labored treatises of some very scientific philosophers; much less can it be expected from the airy compositions of the many superficial writers of the age. *I would not willingly make an addition to the last useless class, and despairing of eminence in the first I rather choose my manuscripts should lie in the cabinets of my friend to be perused when nothing more instructive or entertaining may offer* [emphasis mine].<sup>73</sup>

While letters might be personal, they were also thoughtfully crafted and might become shared (and thus public) documents and authors considered as much when they wrote their letters.

Indeed in spite of the tone, Warren’s letter suggests that her modesty may have been false—or if not false then at least not quite forthcoming. She had already anonymously published her first play the previous year and was thus already engaged in the very public act of playwriting. And when one considers the vast interest in private or “closet” compositions like those Warren alludes to in the above passage, which were regularly exchanged and performed amongst women during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it seems natural that Warren would use this method to get her ideas out into the public. The fact that Warren chose to write her polemical pieces as

plays, a literary genre questioned for its moral legitimacy, places Warren into the role of cultural diplomat as she worked to graft cultural intracolony cohesion through theatre. A closer look at *The Adulateur* enhances this assertion.

In *The Adulateur*, Warren denigrates the selfish and deceitful actions of Massachusetts Governor, Thomas Hutchinson, thinly veiled in the play as “Rapatio, Bashaw of Serbia.” Two months later in April 1773, Warren wrote to a friend showing her clear vexation for Hutchinson’s disregard for colonial rights using theatrical metaphors and allusions;

How often have my worthy friends been called to exhibit the most painful part of *the drama of life*. But as they have hitherto acquitted themselves to the general approbation of the *spectators on this little theatre of action* I have no doubt they will obtain that also of the Judge of every excellence,—what an ample recompense this, for the most disquieting movements we can suffer in this temporary existence...*I think the farce of every day discovers innumerable puppets, who after having danced their hour amid the gazing multitude, retire from the stage to all appearance as little conscious of the great purposes of rationality as the figures that adorn the dear scene*. I will only observe that *I believe the grand pantomime in politics must get his springs retouched [?], and a new note [?] added to the tune of passive obedience*, before he will be able to lull the guardians of American liberty [i.e., the unobservant or impassive and inactive colonists] in an acquiescence to his measures, or an approbation of his laborious speeches to prove the people the property of arbitrary and distant Lords.<sup>74</sup>

Theatre and theatrical imagery clearly resonated with the colonial mindset as Warren suggests here with her allusions to the “drama of life,” “spectators on this little theatre of action,” and the “farce of everyday.” Indeed, Warren calls out Hutchinson as an active participant in this farce, one of the “innumerable puppets” (reflecting the idea of a puppet ruler) who “danced their hour amid the gazing multitude.” In Warren’s hands, Hutchinson becomes the “grand pantomime of politics” and a man who “must get his springs retouched” since his “puppet springs” are faulty.

Jeffrey Richards argues that Warren was shaped by the political and cultural maelstrom in America in which she found herself during the last three decades of the eighteenth century. Richards states that Warren’s politics and political writings trumped gender during the Revolutionary era. He claims she used the political nature of American theatre as a public forum knowing how successful it would be in gaining public attention, and that her keen political

insights were translated into a variety of works including her plays, personal correspondences, poems and political essays. Zagarrri argues, that in fact Warren depended on men in her effort to write about politics, a fact that is reflected in her male-focused plays. In addition, Zagarrri posits, Warren did not receive feminist support and did not actually give her works a legitimate female point of view the result of which is that her plays are actually gender imbalanced.<sup>75</sup> In addition, the publication of her work anonymously suggests that either Warren did not wish to offend her audience by giving them plays written by a woman believing her words would not be as powerful or influential if they were known to have come from her, *or* Warren, outspoken political critic that she was, was not willing to face public censure for her volatile accusations and virulent anti-British government comments.<sup>76</sup> First and foremost, perhaps, she saw herself as wife and mother, and knew that a public life was not acceptable for a woman in her socio-economic position.<sup>77</sup> Examining Warren's dramatic canon informs us how plays became an effective mode of cultural diplomacy within America during the late eighteenth century. Theatre as Warren used it reconnected Anglo-American audiences with Anglo-British culture, established a more unified and cohesive colonial faction and identity, argued effectively against British rule and for colonial independence, and engaged audiences in controversial and powerful socio-political conversations.

### **Warren's Second Play: *The Defeat***

Warren's second play, *The Defeat*, appeared initially in installments in *The Boston Gazette* from 23 May through 19 July 1773, just one month after she wrote the above mentioned letter to Hannah Winthrop. Warren had no difficulty invoking theatrical metaphors to describe her frustrations with the growing political crisis between Massachusetts and Britain, particularly her continued and undisguised disdain for Massachusetts Governor Thomas Hutchinson. Like *The Adulateur*, Warren's second play, *The Defeat* further exposed the duplicitous nature of

Hutchinson. While Warren chose to publish her work anonymously, as she had her first play, Warren's friends were well aware of her authorship. In a letter to Warren on 11 December, Abigail Adams shared her appreciation of Warren's newest work as well as her own interest in (reading, not attending) her play when she wrote on 5 December 1773, six months after Warren's second play appeared in *The Boston Gazette*;

You Madam are so sincere a Lover of your Country, and so Hearty a mourner in all her misfortunes that it will greatly aggravate your anxiety to hear how much she is now oppressed and insulted. To you, who have so thoroughly look'd thro the Deeds of Men, and Develloped the Dark designs of a Rapatio[']s] Soul, No action however base or sordid, no measure however Cruel and Villanous, will be matter of any Surprize... Altho the mind is shocked at the Thought of shedding Humane Blood, more Especially the Blood of our Countrymen, and a civil War is of all Wars, the most dreadfull Such is the present Spirit that prevails, that if once they are made desperate Many, very Many of our Heroes will spend their lives in the cause, With the Speach of Cato in their Mouths, "What a pitty it is, that we can dye but once to save our Country."<sup>78</sup>

Adams' letter to Warren shows her warm admiration for her friend's American loyalties and for her honest examination of human nature, particularly into the "Dark designs of Rapatio['s] Soul" of Hutchinson. She comments how thoroughly colonial America is steeped in Addison's *Cato*, when she envisions dying soldiers speaking Cato's words, "What a pitty it is, that we can dye [sic] but once to save our Country." Abigail Adams was a mother herself to five young children in 1773, three boys and two girls, and she ran the household and farm while her husband spent extended periods in Philadelphia involved with the Continental Congress. She was independently minded and intellectually aware, and like other women during the period (many of whom had faced the threat of death through childbirth), was actively engaged in talk of war since it changed both how she lived and what she was expected to do when her husband went to war.

Yet stepping away from political upheaval surrounding Boston, Adams takes time to share a cultural moment with Warren in discussing her disappointments with plays of Moliere she had recently read. Her remarks suggest both her familiarity with the genre of drama and the

greater colonial acceptance of theatre—even in Boston—as long as it was experienced in published form;

I send with this the 1 volume of Moliere, and should be glad of your opinion of them. I cannot be brought to like them, there seems to me to be a general Want of Spirit, at the close of every one I have felt dissatisfied. There are no characters but what appear unfinished and he seems to have ridiculed Vice without engaging us to Virtue, and tho he sometimes makes us Laugh, yet tis a Smile of indignation... Moliere is said to have been an Honest Man, but sure he has not copied from his own Heart—tho he has drawn many pictures of real Life, yet all pictures of life are not fit to be exhibited upon the Stage.<sup>79</sup>

Adams' criticism of Moliere is interesting since she sees his work as disappointing and that perhaps while his plays made her smile, his view of life should not be exhibited onstage.

Somewhat ironically, less than one year after the publication of Warren's play, the Continental Congress ruled that public performances were extravagant, unseemly (particularly since they reflected a love for imported British culture), and dissolute.<sup>80</sup> While colonial America attempted to gain economic independence from Great Britain, this Association theatre was evaluated on its economic basis, seen as being harmful to the unity of the Association as a whole. Interestingly, the eighth point included in the Articles of Association was the encouragement of "frugality, economy, and industry" most importantly exercised and justified by the exclusion of theatre.<sup>81</sup> Yet, in spite of this obvious disparagement of theatre America on the brink of war with Britain, Warren continued using theatre as cultural diplomacy in order to push her political agenda. She would publish at least one more polemical piece, *The Group* in 1775.

### **Warren's Third Play: *The Group***

I argued previously that women's involvement with Anglophone theatre as actresses and playwrights provided moments of cultural diplomacy that allowed American and British societies to become more socially, culturally and politically connected. Now I argue that within colonial

America, cultural diplomacy between colonies was not only active in the Revolutionary Era, it was an essential form of political engagement that allowed the thirteen original colonies to form social, cultural and political cohesion, and ultimately enabled the colonies to become one unified nation. Warren's three political plays written and published and circulated throughout colonial America during this period helped American citizens in various colonies find ways to connect in order to support and encourage each other, and to see America as "we" and Britain as "the other" as America and Britain moved toward war.

In a pamphlet translated from French, *The Sentiments of a Foreigner on the Disputes of Great Britain with America* published in 1775, the same year Warren's play *The Group* was published, the anonymous author highlights the differences that colonial America must overcome if they were to throw off British rule;

They could not embrace a system of absolute independence without bursting the bands of religion, of oaths, of laws, of language, of blood, of interest, of commerce, of all those habitudes, in fine, which [keep] them united amongst themselves, under the peaceful influence of their common parent. Who sees not, that such rending to pieces must reach the entrails, the heart, the very life of the colonies? Should they have the good fortune to escape the fatal extremity of the wars, would it be an easy matter for them to agree on a new form of government? Was every colony to become a distinct and separate state, what endless divisions amongst them? One may judge of the reciprocal enmities which would originate from such a separation, and the fate of all societies bordering on each other. Should such diversity of laws, the inequality of riches, the variety of possessions must sow, in secret, the seeds of an opposition in interests, be disposed to form a confederation, how adjust the rank which each should hold and the influence which each should possess, in proportion to their respective risks and importance?<sup>82</sup>

The world, indeed, watched as America threatened to stand up against Britain, though onlookers, like this French author, doubted whether the very different characters, religions, and legal structures comprising each colony could, in fact, work together without conflict or without completely restructuring their own individual identities. Somehow the colonies needed to see themselves as unified rather than unique. They needed to work for a common goal and against a common enemy. In spite of a popular public conception today that colonial America was a

cohesive, unified group made up of similar-thinking individuals regardless of whether they lived in Virginia, Massachusetts, or New York, colonial America was a collection of disparate and conflicted colonies that wanted to retain their distinctive viewpoints. Warren's plays, published in Boston, New York, Philadelphia and Jamaica, made their rounds through the colonies, like other propaganda literature, and helped colonists reimagine cultural connections that united them against Britain. The intracolony popularity of Warren's political propaganda plays served to solidify relations between colonies by establishing the face of a common enemy in Britain.

Because propaganda pieces were often advertised together, it is interesting to note that on the back page of this edition of *The Sentiments of a Foreigner on the Disputes of Great Britain with America*, appeared an advertisement of Warren's play, *The Group*, as "Just published and to be Sold by James Humphreys, junior,<sup>83</sup> in Front-street, *The Group, a Farce. Scene at Boston*" along with "*The History of Sir George Ellison, or the Man of Real Sensibility*" and "Second American Edition of [Hannah More's] *The Search after Happiness, A Pastoral Drama.—And Armine and Elvira, A Legendary Tale.*"<sup>84</sup> Yet along with the French translated, Pro-American pamphlet, and advertisements for Warren's anti-British play, *The Group*, and Scott's pro-American novel, was an advertisement for the plays of Hannah More, a member of the famous Bluestocking Group (an intellectual and literary society that included Elizabeth Montague) and an evangelical moralist. What a loyalist was doing publishing such politically volatile and socially questioning works is curious although it is highly likely that his mercenary interests trumped his political leanings and social affiliations during that contentious period when Revolution ignited.

Adams' mentioned in a letter to Warren in December 1773 contemporary political events that eventually led Warren to write her third play, *The Group* in 1775 (See Figure 5.3.3). She writes about the impending tea crisis, and the refusal of colonists to accept tea shipped into Boston Harbor in December 1773, a confrontation that would culminate in the Boston Tea Party on 16 December 1773. Adams shares, "There was a Report prevaild that to morrow there will be an attempt to Land this weed of Slavery"<sup>85</sup> On 11 December 1773, Adams again referenced the tea crisis in Boston Harbour; "Since I wrote the above a whole week has Elapsed and nothing new occurred concerning the tea."<sup>86</sup> Yet, just five days later, a group of men dressed in costume dumped a cargo of tea into Boston Harbour, an event later known as The Boston Tea Party. The colonists' protest resulted in the British military closing Boston Harbour the next day, the Coercive or Intolerable Acts, and news that Britain would appoint officers to serve as councilors to the king.<sup>87</sup> Thomas Gage replaced Thomas Hutchison as Governor of Massachusetts, and once again Warren had material with which to stir her political propaganda in dramatic form.<sup>88</sup>

*The Group*, unlike Warren's earlier works, is actually filled with Loyalists rather than with freedom-loving Patriots. As the play progresses, men chosen to be the king's councilors recognize their failure to uphold the tenets of liberty. *The Boston Gazette* published the first two scenes of her play on 23 January 1775, and *The Massachusetts Spy* followed suit three days later, publishing the same parts of Warren's play. On 3 April, the play was advertised for sale in pamphlet form—four scenes and an epilogue—in *The Boston Gazette* (a typical publication style for political propoganda in America

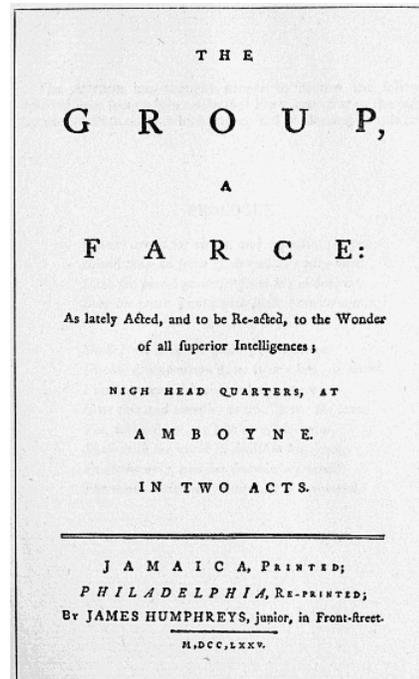


Figure 5.5 Mercy Otis Warren, *The Group*, 1775. Rare Books Collection, Library of Congress.

at the time) and hoping to fan the flames of neighboring colonial audiences, *The Group* quickly entered intracolonial and transatlantic circulation printed as a pamphlet that was published in Philadelphia, Jamaica, and New York.<sup>89</sup> These later published pamphlets claimed on the title page that the play was “lately Acted and to be Re acted, to the Wonder of all superior Intelligences; at the Head Quarters, at Amboyne. Two Acts.”<sup>90</sup> No additional physical evidence exists suggesting that Warren’s play was performed.

The title page to the Boston publication of *The Group* announced; “As the great business of the polite world is in eager pursuit of amusement, and as the public diversions of the season have been interrupted by the hostile parade in the capital; the exhibition of a new farce may not be unentertaining.”<sup>91</sup> And in her introduction, Warren wrote a brief description of the characters in her play, suggesting just how politically minded women could be:

Attended by a swarm of court sycophants, hungry harpies, and unprincipled dangles, collected from the neighbouring villages, hovering over the stage in the shape of locusts, led by Massachusettensis in the form of a basilisk; the rear brought up by Proteus, bearing a torch in one hand, and a powder flask in the other; The whole supported by a mighty army and navy, from Blunderland, for the laudable purpose of enslaving its best friends.<sup>92</sup>

On 3 February, Abigail Adams wrote to reassure Warren that her work had merit and that she should be proud for telling the truth,

I observe my Friend is labouring under apprehensions least the Severity with which a certain Group was drawn was incompatable with that Benevolence which ought always to be predominant in a female character. “Tho an Eagles talon asks an Eagles Eye” and Satire in the hands of some is a very dangerous weapon yet when it is so happily blended with benevolence, and is awakend only by the Love of virtue, and abhorance of vice, when Truth is inoivably preserved, and ridiculous and vicious actions are alone the Subject, it is so far from blameable, that it is certainly meritorious; and to suppress it would be hideing a talent like the slothful Servant in a napkin.

“Who combats virtues foe is virtue's friend”

and a keen Satire well applied, has some times found its way when persuasions, admonitions, and Lectures of morality have failed—such is the abhorance of humane nature when it diviates from the path of rectitude, to be represented in its true coulours.<sup>93</sup>

Warren must have remained apprehensive in spite of her friend's support, for on 20 February 1775 her husband, James, wrote to John Adams, "A Certain Lady of your Acquaintance is much Concerned at hearing it is reported that She wrote the Group. Parson Howe told A large Company at Table that She was the Author of it. If this was true how came he by his Information, would A Certain friend of our have so little descretion as to Communicate such A matter to his Parson if he knew and much less if he only Conjectured it. Do speak to him About it, if he has set his parson A prateing, he ought to stop him."<sup>94</sup> And on 31 March 1775, John Adams' friend, Samuel Swift, wrote to Adams a rather lengthy commentary on Warren's play suggesting just how much attention it gained in patriotic political discourse;

I Sent and got the Group it is Admirally well done as far as it go's, but, *pauca desunt*, vizt. Act. II. Scene I. The persons are, Hateall, Hazlerod, Monsieur, Beau-Trumps, Simple, Humbug, Sr. Sparrow, yet the first part that is Acted is by Scriblerius, who is not in the Scene, nor is Collateralis tho both Speak, and Hateall tho in it Says not a word during the whole Scene Sr. Sparrow do's not Act Any part in it or in the whole play, tho mentioned at the Opening, nor do's Commodore Batteau ever make his Appearance upon the Stage, tho both him and Sparrow are in the Dramatis Personae it may be Tasty but to me it Seems that these two last mention'd might have Acted some part how small soever.

Hateall with his nut brown Kate &c. is inimatable, but what go's even if possible beyond life itself is, in the Same Scene vizt. 3d. *Tis not my temper ever to forgive, I hated Brutus. I hate the Leaders. I hate the People, &c* in Meagre, oh, it is Ad imum pinxit.[sic]

Warren's work circulated widely and was generally treated as thoughtful and well-crafted. She did not acknowledge herself as author of these works to the general public though, as the above quotations suggest, it was well known within her circle of friends and acquaintances that she had indeed written these three plays.

While Warren wrote her polemic pieces that she published in newspapers, British theatre was active and alive in Boston. In 1775, as the Siege of Boston began, Major General John Burgoyne, an outspoken opponent against the closing of theatres in America, shut down Faneuil Hall in order to stage Aaron Hill's English adaptation of Voltaire's play *The Tragedy of Zara* (1732/1736), a performance that examined religious intolerance.<sup>95</sup> Burgoyne wrote the prologue,

mocking Bostonian intolerance of theatre including a potent Cromwellian (and hence repressive) reference;

In Britain once, (it stains th' historic page)  
Freedom was vital struck by party rage.  
Cromwell the fever watch'd, the knife supplied,  
She madden'd and by suicide she died.  
Amidst the groans sank every liberal art  
Which polish'd life or humaniz'd the heart.  
Then sunk the Stage; quell'd by the Bigot Roar.  
Truth fled with Sense & Shakespeare charm'd no more.  
To sooth the times too much resembling those,  
And lull the care-tir'd thought the stage arose...  
Say then Ye Boston Prudes, if Prudes there Are.  
Is this a Task unworthy of the Fair?<sup>96</sup>

Burgoyne saw American aesthetic sensibilities toward liberal arts lacking, and imagined Bostonians to be a community of bigots and prudes who “sunk the Stage.” Burgoyne, the good British citizen that he was, equated theatre with truth and sense with Shakespeare, a belief that reflects O’Quinn’s overarching view of the power of theatre “to [reactivate] past representations but also put forth new representational paradigms to explore present social problematics.”<sup>97</sup>

Indeed Burgoyne saw Boston in 1775 as reflecting the stifling days of Britain under Cromwell, when theatre was not allowed and so, “To sooth the times too much resembling those” he staged a play, or as he put it “a stage arouse.”<sup>98</sup> Indeed, plays themselves were important social commentary that involved the intimate public interaction between performers, playwrights and audience members from all walks of life.<sup>99</sup> Burgoyne seemed quite fond of *The Tragedy of Zara* (or found its subject matter particularly compelling given the circumstances) and in addition to the Boston performance in 1775, Burgoyne staged the play four more times when the British occupied New York in 1780 and 1781.<sup>100</sup>

On 19 April 1775 the Battle of Lexington and Concord, approximately ninety miles from Warren’s home in Barnstable, broke out. The American Revolution had officially begun. Warren’s play, *The Group* coming so near the onset of war affected her friends deeply. On 21

May 1775, having only the Philadelphia pamphlet printing of Warren's play that included just what the *Boston Gazette* had published (lacking Act II, scenes ii and iii), John Adams wrote to Warren's husband, James, "One half the Group is printed here, from a Copy printed in Jamaica. Pray send me a printed Copy of the whole and it will be greedily reprinted here. My friendship to the Author of it."<sup>101</sup> The following day, Abigail Adams enclosed Warren's play in a letter she sent to London Bookseller, Edward Dilly, writing, "I also enclose to you a dramattick performance call'd the Group. Some of the characters are so infamous that they must be known wherever the persons are. I would send you more Coppies, but tis imposible to obtain any thing from Boston [sic]."<sup>102</sup> Notably, Warren's play makes a particularly important entry into cultural diplomacy its transatlantic journey into the hands of a London bookseller. Indeed, Adams suggests that Warren's characters have already become stereotypes (and that Boston had been locked down by the British). Warren's treatment of Tories was particularly scathing in *The Group*, the names of several of her characters along suggested her contempt: Hateall, Hazlerod, Monsieur, Beau-Trumps, Simple, Humbug, Sr. Sparrow. And because she received so much attention for her work and the fact that her work viciously portrayed Tories as despicable men, Warren worried perhaps she had crossed a line and that her work was inappropriate. She feared both public recognition and a damaged reputation. Patriotism was one thing. But respectability and femininity were equally if not more important to Warren who did not know if she had overstepped her bounds.

*The Group* ends with a woman speaking alone onstage, all other performers having retreated into darkness,;

What painful scenes are hovering over the morn,  
When spring again invigorates the lawn!  
Instead of the gay landscape's beauteous dyes,  
Must the stained field salute our weeping eyes,  
Must the green turf, and all the mournful glades,  
Drenched in the stream, absorb their dewy heads,  
While the tall oak, and quivering willow bends  
To make a covert for their country's friends,  
Denied a grave! -- amid the hurrying scene  
Of routed armies scouring over the plain.

Till British troops shall to Columbia yield,  
And freedom's sons are Masters of the field;  
Then over the purpled plain the victors tread  
Among the slain to seek each patriot dead.  
(While Freedom weeps that merit could not save  
But conquering Hero's must enrich the Grave.)  
An adamantine monument they rear  
With this inscription -- Virtue's sons lie here!<sup>103</sup>

As *The Group*, suggests theatre by the end of the eighteenth century in North America was emerging as an important, though limited, venue for women to argue for their place in society as well—even if many of her plays featured few female characters and focused instead on criticizing contemporary governing parties. War, death, stained fields, weeping eyes, dead soldiers denied a grave, these are not images regularly associated with eighteenth-century female voices. And yet her hope for patriotic victory, for British troops to yield to “Columbia,” resonates and the belief that Freedom and virtue are worth dying for and that an unbreakable monument will be raised in their honor. Perhaps publishing her plays allowed Warren to avoid public criticism, since theatres in America during the late eighteenth century remained highly controversial and increasingly became contested sites where Whig and Tory audiences clashed.

On 10 March 1776, Warren wrote a letter to John Adams, defending both her choice of utilizing drama to convey her feelings about the political turmoil and alluding once again to theatre as a metaphor for contemporary events;

While the sphere of Female Life is too Narrow to afford any Entertainment to the Wise and Learned, who are Called to Exhibit some of the most Capital scenes in the Drama. And who dare to tread the Theatre, when not only *A World!* are the Spectators, but the Stage so Conspicuous and the part so Interesting that all posterity will scrutinize their steps, and Future ages Censure or Applaud according to the Imbecility, the Vigour, or Magnanimity that Marks the Conduct of the phi[ladelphi]an actors.<sup>104</sup>

Adams' response to Warren's letter came a month later;

The Ladies I think are the greatest Politicians, that I have the Honour to be acquainted with, not only because they act upon the Sublimest of all the Principles of Policy, vizt. the Honesty is the best Policy but because they consider Questions more

coolly than those who are heated with Party Zeal, and inflamed with the bitter Contentions of active, public Life.

I know of no Researches in any of the sciences more ingenious than those which have been made after the best Forms of Government nor can there be a more agreeable Employment to a benevolent Heart. The Time is now approaching, when the Colonies, will find themselves under a Necessity, of engaging in Earnest in this great and indispensable Work. I have ever Thought it the most difficult and dangerous Part of the Business, Americans have to do, in this mighty Contest, to contrive some Method for the Colonies to glide insensibly, from under the old Government, into a peaceable and contented Submission to new ones.<sup>105</sup>

Interestingly, while Adams supported Warren’s use of playwriting for political propaganda during the Revolutionary Era, he did little to help her later plays produced in London and he avidly

disapproved of women writing histories. Adams saw the writing of histories as the highest literary art form usually reserved for men. He considered it unwomanly for her to publish in 1805 a three-volume, over twelve-hundred page *History of the Rise, Progress, and Termination of the American Revolution*; in part certainly because she was critical of his administration. She saw Adams as a Federalist—or as Martha Saxton has suggested, a Monarchist—while Thomas Jefferson, for Warren appeared to be a true Republican. Adams

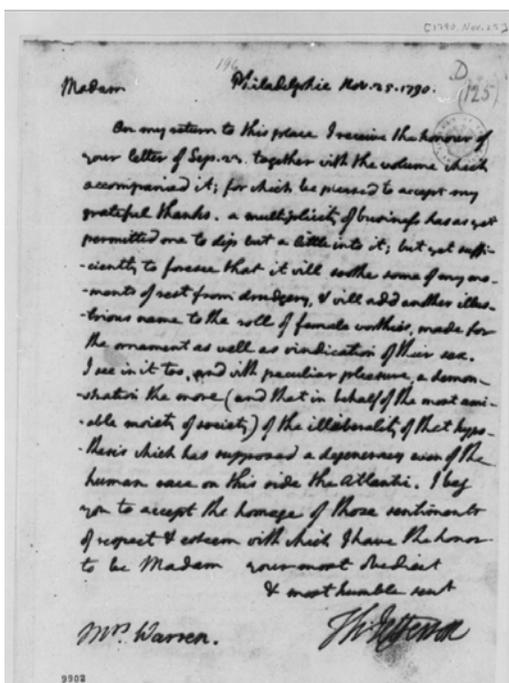


Figure 5.6 Thomas Jefferson Letter to Mercy Otis Warren, 25 November 1790 upon receipt of her *History*. Jefferson wrote: “I receive the honour of your letter of Sept 23 together with the volume which accompanied it...a multiplicity of business has not yet permitted me to dip into but a little of it...it will add another illustrious name to the roll of female authors, made for the ornament as well as vindication of their sex...” The Thomas Jefferson Papers of the Library of Congress, Series 1: General Correspondence. 1651-1827; <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mtj.mtjbib001632>

only forgave Warren much later in life, if indeed he ever really forgave her strong criticism of him.

Thomas Jefferson, (See Figure 5.6)

however, did not seem to hold such gendered views of history and ordered several copies of

Warren's work for himself and for his presidential cabinet, commenting, "anticipation of her truthful account of the last thirty years that will furnish a more instructive lesson to mankind than any equal period known in history."<sup>106</sup> In her *History*, Warren again echoed the republican ideology so important to her that she presented in her propaganda plays of the 1770s and in her more recent historical dramas published in 1790;

If peace and unanimity are cherished, and the equalization of liberty, and the equity and energy of law, maintained by harmony and justice, the present representative government may stand for ages a luminous monument of republican wisdom, virtue and integrity. The principles of the revolution ought ever to be the pole-star of the statesmen, respected by the rising generation; and the advantages bestowed by Providence should never be lost, by negligence, indiscretion, or guilt. The people may again be reminded that the elective franchise is in their own hands; that it ought not to be abused either for personal gratifications, or the indulgence of partisan acrimony. This advantage should be improved, not only for the benefit of existing society, but with an eye to that fidelity which is due posterity.<sup>107</sup>

Warren warned that the future of America as a standard for liberty, justice and republican wisdom was now in the hands of the people.<sup>108</sup> For Warren, the American revolutionaries about whom she wrote become archetypes for republican virtue to be admired, emulated, and memorialized.

Warren's *History*, like her plays, served to ensure that republican virtue would outlast the Revolution. Using Republican Classicism and plays like Joseph Addison's *Cato* as models for her own polemical works, Warren openly engaged with political discourse, challenged British authority, mocked Tory allegiance, and served as a cultural diplomat in an attempt to draw together the thirteen disparate colonial identities and loyalties and forge international sympathy for the American cause.

### **Theatre in Post-War America during the 1780s and Warren's Later Plays: *The Ladies of Castille* and *The Sack of Rome***

While theatre remained a questionable form of entertainment in America during the Revolution, it seems not to have been completely prohibited. All manner of public lectures (often

lightly disguised plays) and pantomimes were staged in Philadelphia. In January 1782, in spite of the official prohibition of theatre, George Washington attended a performance at Philadelphia's Southwark Theatre of Pierre Augustin Caron de *Beaumarchais'* *Eugenie* (in French, 1767) and David Garrick's *The Lying Valet* (1741).<sup>109</sup> In July 1782, British actor and stage manager John Henry (married or cohabited with the actress Maria Storer, as well as with several of her sisters) petitioned for permission to open the Southwark Theatre in Philadelphia though his request was denied. Following the conclusion of war in January 1784, Lewis Hallam, Jr. (Henry's partner) petitioned for the repeal of the law against public performances in Philadelphia, a request that was met with Quaker opposition a month later.<sup>110</sup>

Quakers and other Protestant religions in Philadelphia had long opposed theatre. William Penn, Pennsylvania's Quaker proprietor, had declared stage plays an "offense against God (which incited) People to Rudeness, Cruelty, Looseness and irreligion" in his 1686 Frame of Government and further that his colony should be protected from strolling players who might "provoke the indignation of God against a country."<sup>111</sup> Punishment in Pennsylvania was instated that same year for attending plays and would result in ten days imprisonment and a twenty shilling fine. In 1700, 1706 and 1711 three more laws prohibiting plays were passed in the colony, but each time they were repealed by the Crown. Ironically, no recognized appearance of theatrical performances exists for this period, but when the Pennsylvania Assembly again attempted to pass laws prohibiting theatre in June 1759, the American Company had indeed made itself a presence in Philadelphia with David Douglass gaining permission to "build a Theatre and Act Without the bounds of the City."<sup>112</sup> In spite of continued Quaker opposition (amongst other Protestant groups), theatre continued to thrive in Philadelphia.

Yet by April 1784, Hallam and the American Company began staging "Lectures" in Philadelphia, in reality thinly disguised plays. The company moved on to New York and in November 1785, Lewis Hallam, Jr. (who had tried acting in London himself in the 1770s with

little success) and John Henry opened a theatre in New York. The Hallam/Henry Company boasted several women amongst its company including Elizabeth Tuke (or Turke, Lewis Hallam, Jr.'s second wife); Mrs. And Miss Morris, Maria Storer and Miss Durang, followed in the spring with the addition from England to their company of Mrs. and Miss Kenna.<sup>113</sup> In May 1786 the company performed plays written by two British women: Susanna Centlivre's classic comedy of manners *The Busie Body* (1709) and Frances Brooke's very recent comic opera, *Rosina* (1783).

In August 1786, Hallam and Henry erected a permanent theater in Baltimore (overshadowing the previous venue in Annapolis). Their acting company subsequently moved from New York<sup>114</sup> to Baltimore (performing in their new theatre), and then on to Richmond before venturing back to Philadelphia for the start of a new season. Even in America following the Revolution in the 1780s as acting troupes shifted from city to city and region to region, fitting into new communities must have led to interesting identity challenges as (mostly) British actors and actresses traveled throughout newly independent America. Local dialects changed attitudes about economics, politics and morality depended upon regional interests; slavery still existed in some states but was slowly being removed in others, religious practices varied. Certainly acting companies needed to modify their performances to suit local audiences.

In September 1786, laws in Philadelphia against performances expanded to include pantomimes.<sup>115</sup> By 1787, the lectures previously advertised in Philadelphia by Hallam's company were now called "Concerts and Lectures" and included specific names of operas such as *Robinson Crusoe* and Frances Brooke's *Rosina, or The Reapers* (1783). In March and November 1788, Hallam and Henry again petitioned for the repeal of laws against public performances in Philadelphia and in spite of the restrictions currently in place against theatre, began announcing the proper names of plays in advertisements, opening the winter season on 27 October with Colley Cibber's *The Provoked Husband* (1728) and Elizabeth Inchbald's recently published afterpiece, *The Resolution; or The Widow's Vow* (1786). In July 1788 Quakers petitioned

President Benjamin Franklin (sixth president of the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania, his term ending November of that year), asking for an end to the theatrical performances then taking place in Philadelphia in spite of the official ban, on moral grounds rather than economic motives that now kept theatres restricted.<sup>116</sup> In February 1789, an estimated 1900 citizens of Philadelphia petitioned against the theatre and ten days later 3446 citizens rallied against these petitioners arguing for the right of the individual in support of the theatre.<sup>117</sup> Finally, on 2 March 1789, the anti-theatre law established recently in Philadelphia in September 1786 was repealed—with the caveat that plays were to be sanctioned by a government official before being performed. Thus the beginning of theatre in Philadelphia, while it had roots certainly in previous decades, took hold again in March 1789.

Ten years after Warren published her first three plays and twenty years after Douglass's company performed Godfrey's most original if unsuccessful attempt at drama, another Massachusetts-born man by the name of Royall Tyler (1757-1826; who briefly courted Abigail "Nabby" Adams, daughter of John and Abigail) penned his own comedy, *The Contrast* (1787). Tyler traveled outside of New England's rigid cultural environment and shortly after his first visit to New York, which included an evening at the John's Street Theatre, he wrote *The Contrast*. Within weeks of finishing his play, *The Contrast* was staged at the John Street Theatre in New York City on 16 April 1787 where it saw three additional performances that season.<sup>118</sup> More popular than Godfrey's *The Prince of Parthia* had ever been, *The Contrast* and was performed by the American Company in Philadelphia three times more before the end of the century on 10 December 1789, 7 July 1790, and 27 June 1796.

In a letter from 14 May 1787, Abigail Adams wrote to Warren of her experience living in London and how London theatre was used (disappointingly) as a substitute for social interaction,

Amusement and diversion may always be purchased at the Theatres & places of publick resort, so that little pains is taken to cultivate that benevolence & interchange of kindness which sweetens life, in lieu of which mere visits of form are substituted to keep up the union; not only the wrinkeled brow of age is grasping at the card table & even tricking

with mean avarice, but the virgin bloom of innocence and beauty is withered at the same vigils.<sup>119</sup>

It is interesting to see Adam's reactions to the performances since, as O'Quinn points out, during the late eighteenth century, "audiences were extremely curious about their reactions to performances, not because they were obsessed with the aesthetic merit of a particular play, but because plays at this historical moment were negotiating and presenting the transformations of British society on a nightly basis."<sup>120</sup> Here, Adams recognizes theatre's distraction from the intimacy of socialization. Thus for Adams, discussing a published play trumps responding to a live performance. Both Adams and Warren shared a great love for published plays, finding them intellectually enlightening and informative about the human character and condition.<sup>121</sup> And both women acknowledged the shortcomings of live theatre.

Warren dedicated her last collection of poems and plays to George Washington, writing,

To George Washington, President of the United States of America. Sir, Ambitious to avoid both the style and sentiment of common dedication, more frequently the incense of adulation, than the result of truth, I only ask the illustrious Washington to permit a lady of his acquaintance, to introduce to the public, under his patronage, a small volume, written as the amusement of solitude, at a period when every active member of society was engaged, either in the field, or the cabinet, to resist the strong hand of foreign domination...it must be a bold adventurer in the paths of literature, who dreams of fame, in any degree commensurate with the duration of laurels reaped by a hero, who has led the armies of America to glory, victory and independence.<sup>122</sup>

First, Warren acknowledged her acquaintance with Washington, the first president of the United States, and that she asks for his patronage in support of her work. This mention utilized her connection to America's most recognized and popular "celebrity," Revolutionary War hero and America's first president. Such a connection, Warren recognized, would raise her own social recognition and perhaps lend an air of legitimacy to her work. So while Warren might not *be* an American celebrity, she could *be associated with* the most recognized and admired man in America in 1790.

Second, Warren stated that her work was written in the throes of the Revolution, when political and social upheaval in America was at its greatest. Here Warren utilized cultural diplomacy to connect her work to America's most impactful and important social, cultural and political event in an attempt to unify the colonies against the British. Such cultural intracolony diplomacy reminded Americans that they had a social responsibility to cultivate a national identity. And third, Warren presented the idea that perhaps, just perhaps, she might like a taste of recognition, if not fame, and believed that associating her work with Washington might just bring her some public accolades. Thus while such a simple dedication to Washington seemed, on the surface, merely to ask for Washington's patronage to introduce her work publicly, there was much more within Warren's carefully and well-crafted introduction that served as a reminder that "every active member of society was engaged" in this triumphal moment. This was the first time that Warren published her work under her own name.

Plays continued to serve as a way for Warren to make cultural connections between Britain, republicanism and America. Warren wrote in her preface to her historical tragedy, *The Sack of Rome*;

Theatrical amusements may, sometimes, have been prostituted to the purposes of vice; yet, in an age of taste and refinement, lessons of morality, and the consequences of deviation, may perhaps, be as successfully enforced from the stage, as by modes of instruction, less censured by the severe; while, at the same time, the exhibition of great historical events, opens a field of contemplation to the reflecting and philosophic mind.

My first wish is to throw a mite into the scale of virtue, and my highest ambition to meet the approbation of the judicious and worthy:--In the one, I am gratified from the reflections of my own heart; for the other, I wait with diffidence the determinations of the candid public.<sup>123</sup>

Literary scholar Caroline Winterer argues that this play in particular was significant to Warren both as a woman and as a supporter of the republican cause, even more so than her letters where she had for a time used the Roman pen name of "Marcia." *The Sack of Rome*, Winterer suggests, "brooded at length on the ideal of the Roman matron" and "was a culmination of her dismal view

of the trajectory of American republicanism.”<sup>124</sup> The idea of the Roman play had been imported from Britain, where it had become popular in the seventeenth century “as a tool of republican opposition to monarchy”<sup>125</sup> to America, where it became equally popular as a literary genre, especially in light of increasingly republican sympathies. Significantly, Winterer further argues that Warren, as a published author who signed her work: *M. Warren*, “In the grand republican tradition...mapped the vices of nations onto the form of women, seeing the fall of nations as a decline into feminine vices of luxury and effeminacy.”<sup>126</sup> While Rome is described filled with “soft, effeminate, luxurious sloth,” Warren’s virtuous women are “pawns of the political schemes of men but pillars of nobility and virtue nonetheless.”<sup>127</sup> Her dedication of her play to George Washington was the crowning touch in elevating her work to an authentic republican audience.

Warren had sent her play, a historical tragedy heavily influenced by classicism, to her friend John Adams when he was the first American Ambassador to Britain (1785-1788), in the hopes of seeing it produced in London. This desire to seeing her plays produced was a change from Warren’s earlier political propaganda plays published anonymously in newspapers and pamphlets during the American Revolution. Had she been successful in her efforts to get her plays staged in London, Warren would have been a transatlantic cultural pioneer in this reversal of theatrical diplomacy. Unfortunately, for Warren, Adams replied that the British public was not interested in anything “American” at the moment—the post-Revolutionary cultural exchange remaining rather one-sided in terms of theatre with British plays performed regularly on American stages and British actors still taking the lion’s share of transatlantic roles. Like all of Warren’s other plays, *The Sack of Rome* would not be staged during her lifetime and was instead published quietly in a collection *Poems, Dramatical and Miscellaneous* in 1790.

In spite of the fact that Warren’s plays seems to have circulated with great interest amongst her friends and acquaintances, the style and tone of her plays left her, after her death, outside of important American literary canon. Apparently, Warren’s plays were perceived to be

too limited by their subject matter and the historical moments in which she wrote for her to be considered a significant contributor to the American literary canon. Warren's writing was considered quite provocative and gave voice to ideas of patriotism and freedom, though she is not considered to be a proto-feminist arguing directly for women's rights. Baym argues, "After Warren's death her name continued to figure in accounts of the revolutionary era as that of an extraordinary woman; the political content and polemical style of her writings, however, excluded them from any American literary canon whose content was supposed to be transcendent and whose style was supposed to be aesthetic."<sup>128</sup> Yet Warren's plays are of historical, if not dramatic interest. They are important because they offer a woman's perspective on the state of diplomacy and politics in the 1770s and they helped create intercolonial conversations about what it meant to be an "American" citizen. By publishing her plays instead of seeking to have them performed (no public theatre was open in Boston until 1793), Warren avoided public criticism, especially since they were published anonymously. Yet, as Mercy Otis Warren's plays suggest, theatre by the end of the eighteenth century in North America was emerging as an important, though limited, venue for women to argue for their place in society as well and became a genre through which America began attempting to form its own national character and independent voice.

### **Hannah Cowley: Society and Culture in Late-Eighteenth-Century London**

#### **Introduction**

Playwriting for women in London during the 1770s was very different from playwriting for American women. British women playwrights in general had little difficulty publishing their work under their own names. British audiences were long-accustomed to women's plays being produced, published, discussed. They seemed not to mind controversy that could surround women's plays questioning British social, cultural or even political norms. In contrast no women playwrights in America of note existed before Mercy Otis Warren and her first three plays were published anonymously. As discussed previously in Chapter Two, just as actresses challenged and changed class expectations in English society beginning in 1660, so, too did women playwrights in London challenge and question women's roles in British society. And just as women playwrights during the Restoration era struggled to gain legitimacy in a male-dominated profession, women playwrights writing during the last quarter of the eighteenth century continued to push for their legitimacy on the British stage.

British playwright Hannah Cowley (1743-1809) unlike Mercy Otis Warren, predominantly wrote domestic comedies that were popularly produced on the London stage and throughout the transatlantic



Figure 5.7 Hannah Cowley, “Comedy Unveiling to Mrs. Cowley” by James Heath, 1783. Engraving, printed ink on paper, Harry R. Beard Collection, Victoria and Albert Museum, S. 1863-2012

Anglophone world, often within months of when they first appeared onstage in London. Cowley (See Figure 5.7) stands next to Aphra Behn and Susanna Centlivre, discussed in Chapter Two, as one of Britain's most significant and influential women playwrights.

Born Hannah Parkhouse on 14 March 1743, Cowley was the daughter of a bookseller, Philip Parkhouse, and his wife, Hannah Richard. Cowley's father had been raised for the church, which included a classical education and in turn, Parkhouse provided his daughter Hannah with a similar education in the Classics. Cowley's father had also been active and outspoken in local politics (much as Warren's family had engaged with political discourse, both local and national). When she was in her mid or late twenties, Hannah married Thomas Cowley, in either 1768 or 1772, records are unclear. Thomas Cowley was a government official and part-time journalist who supplemented his income as a theatre critic and an editor with the *London Gazetteer*. Cowley wrote of her husband, he "has a great spirit" though he would eventually leave her and head to India.<sup>129</sup> Thus while Cowley was not raised in the elite intellectual atmosphere of Warren, she had access to the latest literature, married comfortably (at least initially), and lived a life that allowed her the occasional trip to the theatre. After one such occasion, according to Cowley, she sat down and began writing *The Runaway*.<sup>130</sup> Cowley later claimed in the Preface of *Albina* that "the idea of writing for the Stage struck me by accident, and the Runaway was my first attempt."<sup>131</sup> She further claimed that her play "succeeded...on the Stage, and in its sale, far beyond my most sanguine expectations; and during its run, which was stopped by the Benefits, was one of the most profitable Plays, both to the Author and Manager, that appears on the records of the *Treasure-books* at either [Covent Garden or Drury Lane] House. A success so encouraging opened a new prospect of advantage to my Family, which I have since pursued with alacrity."<sup>132</sup> Cowley's commercial success sometimes makes critics dismissive of her greater contributions in the British literary canon both as a feminist critic and as a political commentator. However, Angela Escott argues the opposite that "Cowley was radical in her gender politics, prepared to

criticize the political system, to raise issues of inequalities in society and to combat confining perceptions of women.”<sup>133</sup> I would agree with Escott and suggest that Cowley’s social and political engagement, writing as she did during the Revolutionary Era, parallels the writing of Mercy Otis Warren, provided very important and very public social, political and gendered commentary on contemporary society. While her plays may have been, for the most part domestic or romantic comedies, Cowley nonetheless made critical assessments of contemporary society.

Cowley’s work may initially appear staunchly conservative. This is not surprising given women authors writing at the end of the eighteenth century still had to maintain an aura of femininity and were expected to appear within gender norms of the time. Yet as Escott argues, and I concur, “The restrictions on a woman dramatist were due to lingering associations of the green room with strolling players and prostitutes, and to the choice of a public form of art when women were experiencing strong social pressure to conform to bourgeois notions of femininity.”<sup>134</sup> Reputations die hard and theatre’s reputation continued, even in England, to project an aura of morally loose characters—playwrights less than performers perhaps, but often all individuals associated with theatre were tossed into the same immoral bin. Escott comments that Cowley’s comedy “was of its time” meaning that she knew her audience well and wrote both to entertain and inform. Survival in the competitive world of theatre meant she could not risk losing her toehold on success.<sup>135</sup> Instead of writing sentimental comedies that simply ended with a convenient marriage, however, the “all’s well that end’s well” the type of uncomplicated comedies popular during most of the eighteenth century in London, Cowley wrote “laughing comedies” intended to question vice and virtue. Indeed, the Prologue to *Albina*, teasingly calls Cowley “The laughing Princess of the Comic Scene.”<sup>136</sup> It is important to stress that while comic in nature, Cowley’s plays raised important questions about British social class structure, sympathized with her lower born characters, and scoffed at the *bon ton* (London’s social elite), the very people who filled the theatres and watched her plays. In spite of social restrictions

imposed upon her, Cowley even questioned her own role (really the role of all females) in British society and explored how women might take charge of their own lives. The strong female characters Cowley created often arranged their own marriages and married mates who were their intellectual equals, all while engaging in cleverly satirical and highly entertaining banter.

In 1783, Cowley's husband, Thomas, left her with their two children in London while he relocated to India to work for the East India Company.<sup>137</sup> He never returned to England and died in India in 1797, for the most part having abandoned Cowley to her own devices. Since Cowley supported her family, writing plays that pleased the audience was of highest concern. Cowley's play, *A Bold Stroke for a Husband*, came out in 1783, the year her husband left. Indeed, six of her plays were written after Thomas Cowley left England and his fourteen-year absence or abandonment and the resulting conditions caused by the single-parent status under which she wrote were likely a significant influence on her subsequent work. As a struggling single mother required to support her family, Cowley did not feel that she was always treated fairly as her Preface to *Albina* suggests;

Had I taken up my pen merely in pursuit of applause, I should have been completely gratified; but this, though so ostentatiously held out as the  *motive* for the productions in the Poetic line, has seldom, in any age or country, produced works of considerable reputation. Dramatic Writers, in particular, have always sought support for their labour, which is too great to be pursued for amusement. This may appear a vulgar topic; but to me it is a very serious subject of complaint, that, by the conduct of the Winter Managers, I have been deprived of a reasonable prospect of several hundred pounds, and have spent  *years* of fruitless anxiety and trouble. The hazard of pleasing the Public is great; and the Writer who fails to do this, must submit without complaint.<sup>138</sup>

As someone who depended upon the material rewards of playwriting, Cowley knew that a theatre manager withholding her plays meant a significant loss of income.

Cowley tried her hand at a variety of styles including farce and pantomime, two dramatic styles that her contemporaries viewed as "illegitimate theatre" since they were shorter pieces (usually two or three acts) and could be performed in London's unlicensed theatres or as afterpieces to a main piece. Her later forays into the darker world of tragedy were also not well

received by London audiences, in part because many still viewed tragedy as inappropriate for women writers in Britain. Her Prologue to *Albina; a Tragedy* attempted to defend her transition over to tragic playwright; “Not write in Tragic stile! [sic]—Pray tell me why? / Sure those who made you laugh, *may* make you cry.”<sup>139</sup> She continued, “When the *light* Scenes, our Author’s pencil drew. ‘ Extorted—all she ask’d—a smile from You; / Her grateful mind a new-born ardor caught. / A loftier fancy, and sublime thought: / To her rapt eye the Martial Ages rose’ / And, as her Muse impell’d, her Story flows.”<sup>140</sup> Unfortunately, Cowley’s Prologue to *Albina* did not convince audiences or her skills as a tragic author. Disappointed with the public’s lack of support for her more serious plays and tired of producing plays she felt to be increasingly inconsequential, she gave up writing for the theatre altogether by 1794.<sup>141</sup>

Cowley’s career as a playwright spanned almost two decades from 1776 to 1794 and for fourteen years she was the sole supporter of her family.<sup>142</sup> Cowley wrote at least fifteen plays, including her shorter afterpieces, farces and pantomimes. Her plays were performed at each of the royal theatres, Coven Garden, Drury Lane and Haymarket between 15 February 1776 with Drury Lane producing *The Runaway, A Comedy* and 6 December 1794 with Covent Garden Theatre performing *The Town Before You, A Comedy*. Eight of her plays she identified in their titles as comedies (performance date listed first, followed by date of publication): *The Runaway; A Comedy* (1776/1776), *The Belle’s Stratagem; A Comedy* (1780/1782), *Which is the Man?; A Comedy* (1782/1783), *A Bold Stroke for a Husband* (1783/1784), *More Ways Than One* (1783/1784), *A School for Greybeards; or The Mourning Bride, A Comedy* (1786/1786), *A Day in Turkey; or The Russian Slaves, A Comedy* (1791/1792), and *The Town Before You, A Comedy* (1794/1795) and one play was classified a farce, *Who’s the Dupe? A Farce* (1779/1779). Two of her plays were classified tragedies: *Albina, Countess Raymond; A Tragedy* (1779/1779), and *The Fate of Sparta; or, The Rival Kings, A Tragedy* (1788/1788). Five plays premiered at the Drury Lane Theatre (*The Runaway, Who’s the Dupe?, School of Eloquence, A School for Greybeards,*

*The Fate of Sparta*), nine, including her two most popular works, *The Belle's Stratagem* and *A Bold Stroke for a Husband*, debuted at the Covent Garden Theatre (*Lady Fashion's Rout in The Touchstone: or, Harlequin Traveller; The Belle's Stratagem, The World as it Goes; or, A Party at Montpelier; Some Thoughts Are Best, Which is the Man?, A Bold Stroke for a Husband, A Day in Turkey, The Town Before You*); and Cowley's first tragedy, which eventually caused significant conflict between her and Hannah Moore, *Albina*, was staged at the Haymarket. In her final play, *The Town Before You*, disillusioned by social changes that demanded extravagant, low-comedic entertainments, Cowley denigrated London society and promised to cease writing for the stage, ending her almost twenty-year career as a professional playwright.<sup>143</sup> Clearly Cowley (See Figure 5.8) knew how to entertain and engage audiences. Yet while most of her plays were comedies, she made an effort within her plays to provide moral and intellectual lessons.



Figure 5.8 Hannah Cowley, ca. 18<sup>th</sup> Century, Engraving, unknown artist. (Attributed to Richard Cosway) Harry R. Beard Collection, Victoria and Albert Museum, S 1862-2012.

**Hannah Cowley's World: Comedy, Society,  
Politics, and Patriotism**

Cowley's plays ultimately present a form of feminized patriotism previously explored in Warren's plays.<sup>144</sup> Angela Escott argues that during the eighteenth century, theatre in Britain became even more of a "tool for expressing loyalty to the country" while Kathleen Wilson sees theatre as significant in "defining national identity and bolstering the 'imperial project' in the eighteenth century."<sup>145</sup> The latter, I argue, may be one reason why American audiences did not

embrace eagerly embrace staged performances since they saw theatre as a form of British cultural coercion rather than cultural influence.<sup>146</sup> Being a patriot in Britain may have meant different things than being a patriot in America during the last quarter of the eighteenth century—yet both terms suggest patriotism (even jingoism) allowed for active participation in political life.

Just as Warren wrote her propaganda plays to participate in American patriotic life and, in a sense claim a form of “American” citizenship, so too, Linda Colley argues, British women wished to claim an identity as British “patriots” that allowed them “to participate in British political life, and ultimately [through their writings and their participation in political discourse allowed them to demand] a much broader access to citizenship.”<sup>147</sup> Thus even though the plays of Warren and Cowley on initial reading appear significantly different in both style and purpose (Warren’s plays meant to engage intellectual dialogue as literary references to Republican Classicism—her pen name was “a Columbian patriot”—while Cowley’s plays served as escapist entertainment and allowed her to make a living) both playwrights used theatre as an effective and very public literary device through which they could actively engage with social, political and cultural discussions and thus express national loyalty and help define national identity and women’s role as engaged citizens.

In spite of fractious transatlantic events taking place in 1776, comedies headlined most London theatres and women playwrights, desiring success and acceptance in a highly competitive environment, produced some of the most well received comedies of the period.<sup>148</sup> Cowley’s first play, a light-hearted comedy called *The Runaway*, focused on the social standings of women and society’s views on marriage as well as the injustices women encountered both within the family and in society. As a first-time author, thirty-three-year-old Cowley had appealed to David Garrick (1717-1779), manager of the Theatre Royal Drury Lane for his support. Her dedication to David Garrick in *The Runaway* Cowley acknowledges his help, “Unpatronized by any name, I presented myself to you, obscure and unknown. You perceived dawnings in my Comedy, which you

nourish'd and improved. With attention and solicitude, you embellished, and presented it to the world—*that* World, which has emulated your generosity, and received it with an applause, which fills my heart with much lively gratitude.”<sup>149</sup> Her appeal succeeded, and on 15 February 1776, Garrick produced *The Runaway*. Audiences clearly approved. Cowley wrote two more plays before the end of the year, a farce, *Who's the Dupe?* and a tragedy, *Albina*. Both of these plays met difficulties in being produced and were not staged until 1779.<sup>150</sup> While *The Runaway*, claimed no political leanings it was the last play David Garrick (1717-1779) staged at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane on 15 February 1776 before his retirement and it was first staged just a few months after fighting broke out between British troops and local colonial militia in Lexington and Concord, Massachusetts.



Figure 5.9 Theatre Royal Drury Lane, After Engraving by Patrick Beagle, 1776. Private Collection, Bridgeman Art Library.

While Cowley certainly managed to achieve success as a playwright, David Garrick was important in her initial success.<sup>151</sup> Responsible for the management of London's Theatre Royal Drury Lane since 1747 (See Figure 5.9), Garrick traveled the countryside in search of new talent and in addition managed the talented actresses Hannah Pritchard (1711-1768) and Ann Barry (1734-1801). He even brought Sarah Siddons, perhaps Britain's most famous eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century actress, to the Drury Lane stage in 1774, though by 1777 she had left for a circuit tour after disappointing London audiences. Sadly, Garrick, who died in 1779, never did

see Siddons become the genius onstage that he imaged she might become. His attention to women playwrights was similarly impressive and while, as Ellen Donkin points out, Garrick likely treated male and female playwrights equally, she argues that “between 1747 and 1776 (the duration of his tenure as manager of Drury Lane), Garrick produced nine contemporary women playwrights (not counting Hannah More, whose first play opened the year after he retired), for a total of 128 performances. By contrast Covent Garden produced three contemporary women playwrights in the same span of time for a total of twenty performances.”<sup>152</sup> Donkin importantly argues that Garrick gave women playwrights increased attention and assistance so that “the women he took under his wing were so grateful for the opportunity to be produced by him that they were anxious to please him, to be molded by his tastes and wisdom...[developing] a kind of dependency.”<sup>153</sup>

Cowley clearly appreciated Garrick’s production of her play, and was drawn to his generosity of spirit in giving her support. She wrote,

Had you rejected me, when I presented my little RUNAWAY, depressed by the refusal, and all confidence in *myself* destroyed, I should never have presumed to dip my pen again. It is now my talk to convince You and the World, that a generous allowance for a young Writer’s faults, is the best encouragement to Genius—‘tis a kindly Soil, in which weak groundlings are nourish’d, and from which the loftiest Trees draw their strength, and their beauty.<sup>154</sup>

Further, Donkin asserts that, “Garrick’s role in assisting women playwrights has never been adequately acknowledged...From the letters, prefaces, prologues and epilogues, he emerges as a benign and canny mentor to virtually every playwright whose work he decided to produce, but for a significant number of women playwrights, this kind of assistance constituted their only point of access into the profession.”<sup>155</sup> Many individuals, including Cowley, attributed the success of English theatre directly to Garrick’s involvement; “the English Theatre owes its emancipation from grossness, and buffoonery—that to Mr. GARRICK’S *judgement* it is indebted for being the first Stage in Europe.”<sup>156</sup> Garrick’s death shortly after he retired from the stage left Cowley, and

other women dramatists like her, without a theatre mentor. According to Donkin, “It was Garrick’s mixed legacy to late eighteenth-century theater that he created opportunities for women playwrights, but was unable to influence the institution of theater sufficiently to insure them a sense of belonging after he was gone.”<sup>157</sup> Having just made her entrance as a London playwright, therefore, Cowley struggled to find her footing again after her early success with *The Runaway* under Garrick’s tutelage. But once she did regain the public’s attention and support from theatre managers, she easily ascended to become one of London’s most well-respected and successful women dramatists of the eighteenth century. Writing comedy, tragedy, farce, pantomime, and even poetry before ending her decades-long career, Cowley retired in 1801 quietly to Tiverton, the town in which she was born, and in which she died on 11 March 1809, just days before her sixty-sixth birthday.

### **Hannah Cowley’s *The Runaway* (1776)**

While *The Runaway* was Cowley’s first play, it was, significantly, Garrick’s last official play before quitting the stage. Cowley dedicated her play to him, remarking, “it is particularly gratifying, that a Play of *mine* closes your *dramatic* life—It is the highest pleasure to me, that *that* Play, from its success, reflects no dishonour on your judgement [sic] as a Manager.”<sup>158</sup> Cowley continued;

I perceive how much of this applause I owe to my *Sex*—*The Runaway* has a thousand faults, which, if written by any Man, would have incurred the severest lash of Criticism—but the Gallantry of the English Nation is equal to its Wisdom—they beheld a *Woman* tracing with feeble steps the borders of the Parnassian Mount—pitying her difficulties (for ‘tis a thorny path) they gave their hands for her support and placed her *high* above her level. All this, Sir, and whatever may be its consequences, I owe to you.<sup>159</sup>

Cowley also asked the audience to forgive her faults as an untrained female playwright (a traditional trope for women playwrights from Aphra Behn’s time), stating, “Our Poet of to-night,

in faith's a—Woman. / A woman, too, untutor'd in the School, / Nor Aristotle knows, nor scarce  
a rule / By which fine writers fabricate their plays.”<sup>160</sup> Further, Cowley wrote;

Our painter mark'd those lines—which Nature drew,  
Her fancy glow'd, and colour'd them—for you;  
A Mother's pencil gave the light and shades,  
A Mother's eye thro' each soft scene pervades;  
Her children rose before her flatter'd view,  
Hope stretch'd the canvas, whilst her wishes drew.<sup>161</sup>

Cowley thanked her readers for their trust in her work, confessed her “Mother's eye” and  
claimed (or pretended claim) a position of submission as a playwright within this male-dominated  
theatrical world.<sup>162</sup>

Cowley's comedy about marriage questioned the injustices women encountered in  
contemporary British society. While Cowley might not yet be a fully formed playwright, her first  
play remained enormously popular. By 1800, *The Runaway* had seen at least thirty-nine  
performances in London alone. It continued its popularity into the nineteenth century and Cowley  
would become one of Britain's most adored playwrights.<sup>163</sup> *The Runaway* was also produced by a  
man whose career—which included mentoring and discovering female theatrical talent and which  
would literally define an era—was coming to a close. *The Runaway* may have been simply a  
starting point in her Cowley's literary career, but it seems that in staging her first production,  
Garrick pulled out all the stops to ensure its success and included his most popular and trusted  
performers.<sup>164</sup> Interestingly, it was also produced as tensions between Britain and colonial  
America mounted. Yet in spite of the historical importance of the timing of her play, *The  
Runaway* contained no overt references to war.

*The Runaway* was, in essence, a light-hearted comedy involved a series of interwoven  
tales of love. Home from college, young George Hargrave discovers that the “Runaway,” a young  
woman his godfather Mr. Drummond has taken in, is the same woman he met at a party and with  
whom he fell in love recently. Unfortunately, his father wants him to marry the rich, conceited,

and much older Lady Dinah, who possesses “forty thousand pounds and is sister to an Irish Peer.”<sup>165</sup> In the meantime, George’s cousin, Bella, arranges George’s sister (and her cousin) Harriet to fall in love with George’s friend, Sir Charles. When Emily is retrieved by her father, George follows behind, takes her back and Mr. Drummond, with a change of heart, gives the two lovers land so that they can begin a home of their own.

Yet instead of being a simple comedy that presents the comical interactions between the sexes, by the end of *The Runaway*, various roles women literally played in late-eighteenth-century British society are brought into question, and suggests how Cowley focused on examining social customs, particularly marriage and women’s roles in contemporary Britain.<sup>166</sup> At the beginning of *The Runaway*, for example, the character of George Hargrave relates the qualities of the ideal woman to his sister, Harriet. “A fine Woman,” he claims, “gives warmth to all around her—She is that universal spirit about which Philosophers talk; the true point of attraction that governs Nature, and controuls [sic] the universe of Man.”<sup>167</sup> Cowley merely hints at the potential of women to influence society without criticizing the expectations and assumptions held by contemporary audiences. Bella, George’s cousin, finds particularly unpleasant the language women must accept in their marriage vows (even though she, herself, is a successful matchmaker) stating; “*Love*, one might manage that perhaps—but *honour, obey*,--‘tis strange the Ladies had never interest enough to get this ungallant form mended.”<sup>168</sup> Not satisfied with having a woman end the play on such strong terms, however, Cowley turns the dialogue back to the control of Mr. Drummond, George’s godfather, who assuages Bella’s concerns for the demands that women obey men in their marriage vows and replies to end the play,

The marriage vow, my dear Bella, was wisely framed for common apprehensions—Love teaches a train of duties that no vow can reach—that refined minds only can perceive—but which they pay with the most delighted attention. You are now entering on this state—may You—and You (*to Bella significantly*) and You (*to the audience*) possess the blisful [sic] envied lot of—Married Lovers!<sup>169</sup>

Although Bella (the Beauty) is not the last voice heard in *The Runaway*, her comments offer the penultimate point and suggest that while Cowley did not overtly address the damaging nature of the injustices British women experienced, she did present inconsistencies how women and men were treated. Yet all's well that ends well, for in *The Runaway*, lovers gain their true loves; pretentious and deceitful suitors (as Lady Dinah) are driven off, and the "marriage vow" that so worries Bella as "ungallant" is addressed as "wisely framed" as a contract. In essence, Love trumps all as Mr. Drummond points out to Bella and the audience. Drummond's suggestion of a companionate marriage becomes a recurring theme that resonates in Cowley's anonymously published poem *Edwina the Huntress*, where marriage is described as being "when Two Minds form one extactic Whole, / One sweetly blended wish, one sense, one soul!"<sup>170</sup>

That Cowley's *The Runaway* appeared onstage in London just before David Garrick's retirement and subsequent death was significant. With Garrick's death came enormous changes to London theatre that included what the audience saw, how the audience experienced theatre, and eventually who attended plays. Changes in technological advancements in building and in materials, the desire (and necessity) to replace and enlarge ageing theatre structures, and the introduction of a new genre in theatre, melodrama, signified that theatre at the end of the eighteenth century would eventually become significantly different from theatre of the early nineteenth century.<sup>171</sup> Audiences by the end of the eighteenth century no longer found domestic and romantic drama as engaging as melodramatic productions that included ghosts and castles, enormous lakes and waterfalls created onstage, and a strange, almost obsessive fascination with the supernatural.<sup>172</sup>

### **Hannah Cowley's *The Belle's Strategem* (1780)**

Hannah Cowley followed up her *The Runaway* with two more plays within the year, her two-act farce, *Who's the Dupe?* and her tragedy, *Albina, Countess Raymond*. She gave her plays for consideration to Richard Brinsley Sheridan, who had taken over as manager of the Drury Lane Theatre after Garrick's retirement. Given the highly successful run of her first comedy, it is surprising that Sheridan did not produce either of these works soon after they were given to him. Instead, Sheridan kept Cowley's plays in storage, causing the playwright much frustration since she was not free to offer them to any other theatre. Unlike Garrick, Donkin suggests that Sheridan intentionally sabotaged women playwrights' productions, seeking to limit their access to the stage as professionals.<sup>173</sup> When her plays did finally appear, the former at Drury Lane Theatre and the later at the Haymarket, she saw strands of similarities between her plays and the recently staged plays written by Hannah More, *Percy* and *The Fatal Falsehood*. The Prologue for *Percy*, staged successfully at the Covent Garden Theatre in December 1777, was written by Garrick himself. *The Fatal Falsehood* was staged at the Covent Garden Theatre on 6 May 1779, a month after Cowley's farce, *Who's the Dupe?* appeared in Drury Lane Theatre on 10 April 1779, and almost three months before Cowley's tragedy *Albina* was staged at the Haymarket Theatre on 31 July 1779. Sheridan wrote the Prologue for *The Fatal Falsehood* himself.

Unwilling to classify Sheridan as an intentional threat to the staging of plays by women playwrights, literary critic Marianna D'Ezio argues, on the other hand, that to claim Sheridan was actively engaged in limiting the production of women's plays is misrepresenting him and his role as theatre manager. While he may have been critical of women's work, D'Ezio argues, he was certainly indebted to women playwrights, his own mother included, in his successful run as theatre manager of Drury Lane.<sup>174</sup> Certainly Cowley's entry into theatrical royalty was hard won. In spite of her initial success and support from Garrick, the delays in Cowley's next few plays for production caused public enmity. Regardless, Cowley continued writing and in 1780, she wrote and wrote her most popular work, *The Belle's Stratagem*, produced by the Covent Garden Theatre

on 22 February 1780 and published two years later. Once again, Cowley returned to the “safer” feminine topics focusing on love and marriage and yet even within this work, Cowley challenged British society’s expectations of women.

In *The Belle’s Stratagem*, (drawing inspiration from George Farquhar’s 1707 comedy, *The Beaux’s Stratagem*), Cowley once again presents a witty examination of marriage and the roles that women and men play. Queen Charlotte (to whom Cowley dedicated her play) was so enamored of Cowley’s play that she ordered it to be presented to the royal family annually.<sup>175</sup> It also made its transatlantic crossing and was performed in Philadelphia on 24 May 1790 and at the John’s Street Theatre in New York on 6 January 1794. One later critic wrote of *The Belle’s Stratagem*, “Among its elements are passionate sincerity, the manifest capability of imparting great happiness, triumphant personal beauty, which yet is touched and softened by a wistful and sympathetic sadness, and that controlling and compelling instinct—essentially feminine—which endows with vital import every experience of love, and creates a perfect illusion in scenes of fancied bliss or woe.”<sup>176</sup> Cowley’s dedication to Queen Charlotte expresses her intention in crafting the ideal female character;

Madam,

In the following comedy, my purpose was to draw a female character, which, with the most lively sensibility, fine understanding, and elegant accomplishments, should unite that beautiful reserve and delicacy which, whilst they veil those charms, render them still more interesting. In delineating such a character, my heart naturally dedicated it to your majesty; and nothing remained but permission to lay it at your feet.<sup>177</sup>

Her first dedication had been to David Garrick, her second to Queen Charlotte. Clearly Cowley knew that showing obeisance to influential individuals might have its benefits and indeed, the popularity of Cowley’s play may have been influenced by just how much Queen Charlotte liked it and insisted it continue to be staged in London.

*The Belle’s Stratagem* contained a fairly standard double-plotline, like *The Runaway*. It follows the relationship and developing love interests between Letitia Hardy and Doricourt, the

man to whom Letitia has been promised since childhood but hasn't seen since; and between newlyweds, Sir George Touchwood and his wife, Lady Frances Touchwood. Letitia falls madly in love with Doricourt and intends to charm him, though he, recently returned from Europe, remains disinterested in Letitia, finding her less elegant than European women. In spite of her feelings for him, Letitia is put off by his pretentious attitude toward her and enlists the help of her father (Mr. Hardy) and Mrs. Racket (a widow) to convince Doricourt that she is uncouth so that he retreats from the wedding. She is so convincing as an actress that she succeeds. Touchwood, on the other hand, is overly protective of his country-bred and rather lovely wife, Lady Frances. While in London with Mrs. Racket to attend a masquerade, Lady Frances meets Courtall, who brags to his friend that he will seduce her. These characters all come together at the masquerade. Courtall, dressed the same as Sir George, takes home the woman he believes is Lady Frances, only to find he has slept with a prostitute—in shame he leaves town. Mr. Hardy pretends to be ill so that when Doricourt visits him on what is supposed to be his deathbed, he begrudgingly promises to marry Letitia, yet Letitia enters the room and Doricourt discovers that in spite of his prejudices and idealized views on European beauty that Letitia is, in fact lovely. What is uncovered in Cowley's play is that clothing and manners do not the person make. The variety of literal and figurative masks that the various characters take on and put off suggest just how changeable and changed each character can be.

The trope of the masquerade was certainly not a new device for theatre, nor one unknown to women playwrights. As discussed in Chapter Two, Aphra Behn employed the masquerade in form of a carnival in *The Rover* to hide her female characters identities. Likewise, Susanna Centlivre's *The Perjur'd Husband* was set in the time of Carnival. Yet it is Cowley's use of the masquerade in *The Belle's Stratagem* that I would like to consider as an important moment of cultural diplomacy that helped shape and define British national character and the role of theatre in British society. While the action in Cowley's *The Runaway* begins (off stage) with a

masquerade suggesting the importance of the role of hidden identity in both theatre and in British society, *The Belle's Stratagem* ends with one, again suggesting the importance of the idea that one's character cannot be seen by initial physical appearances but must be revealed, gradually, over association. In *The Runaway*, George does not recognize immediately that Emily, the runaway, is actually the woman he had fallen in love with at the masquerade before arriving at his father's house and yet is elated when he discovers this association. In Cowley's second comedy, masquerades and masks in particular become important is suggesting the duplicitous nature of humanity. Over the entirety of *The Belle's Stratagem*, most of the characters put on masks and disguises at one point or another during the play, which results in creating, as Finberg writes, "a dizzying parody of both theatre itself and society."<sup>178</sup>

Cowley immediately sets up *The Belle's Stratagem* to be a play within a play. The first act opens at Lincoln's Inn with Courtall bemoaning the fact that his female cousins, newly come to town, want him to go with them "to the park, and the plays, and the operas, and the Almacks, and all of the fine places."<sup>179</sup> Shortly after, a fairly cloaked reference to Britain's war with America, and with America's ally, France, arises when Courtall, still discussing his "virgin" cousins whom he believes came to London to marry, states, "The ladies are going to petition for a bill that, during the war, every man may be allowed two wives."<sup>180</sup> The reference to war would have been understood and appreciated by contemporary audiences in London, but given its humorous context as a reason for men to have two wives (soldiers were sent to America and to the West Indies thus greatly depleting the number of marriageable men in Britain), rather than the seriously of War suggests just how *not* seriously British audiences found the ongoing altercation with America to be. Cowley's play appeared in 1780; the war had been going on for four years and would continue for another three years.

Cowley mixes talk of divorce, weddings, death and politics all in one sprightly speech with Courtall quipping, "Divorces are absolutely out...for weddings, death, and politics I never

talk of but whilst my hair is dressing.”<sup>181</sup> Meanwhile, Doricourt claims that only European women have beauty; “*English* beauty! ‘Tis insipidity. It wants the zest; it wants poignancy...I have known a Frenchwoman, indebted to nature for no one thing but the pair of decent eyes...I was in the room half an hour before I could catch the colour of [Miss Hardy’s] eye; and every attempt to draw her into conversation occasioned a cruel embarrassment.”<sup>182</sup> Unwilling to enter a passionless marriage, Letitia endeavors to make Doricourt dislike her, claiming, “’tis much easier to convert a sentiment into its opposite than to transform indifference into tender passion.”<sup>183</sup> Here, again, Cowley finds herself asserting a desire for companionable marriages with women taking charge of who they will marry. By the play’s end, Doricourt completely changes his tune and calls Letitia Hardy, “Charming, charming creature” and tells her;

My charming bride! It was a strange perversion of taste that led me to consider the delicate timidity of our deportment the mark of an uninformed mind or inelegant manners...It is a scared veil to your own charms; it is the surest bulwark to your husband’s honour, and cursed be the hour—should it ever arrive—in which British ladies shall sacrifice to foreign graces the grace of modesty!<sup>184</sup>

Doricourt’s speech is significant to understanding Cowley’s work as a form of cultural diplomacy that helped establish British national identity and gave voice to women in British society. First, Letitia is identified as “charming” and a “creature,” suggesting both her beguiling nature (with an ability to charm) and her changeling capabilities (also reflected in the roles she played, the masquerade and the reference to “veil” in his final speech.). Second, Doricourt’s speech suggests both how British society wanted women to behave *and* how Cowley imagined women should be allowed to behave. Doricourt assesses Letitia’s “delicate timidity” as weakness of mind to start, then attributes her actions to a type of modesty of which British women should be proud, claiming no “foreign graces” trump British modesty. And third, Doricourt associates feminine modesty as the “sacred veil” of Letitia’s charms (indicating obvious references to masks, masquerades, but also hinting at the religious practice of taking the veil), which in turn references the act of getting married or wearing a wedding veil.

Throughout *The Belle's Stratagem*, Cowley suggests that the world of the theatre is not unlike contemporary British society. She uses her play, and the time given for the performance, to share with her audience both that women can and should actively engage in their own courtship and marriage, and that they should be proud of their British identity, character and modest temperament in spite of how others might see them and in spite of their comparisons to European women. Thus Cowley presents an ideal woman for London audiences, a woman formed with a strong British character that is uniquely her own, but who, while modest in demeanor, is also assertive in her thoughts and actions and desirous of a mate with whom she can engage on an equal setting. Having briefly examined Cowley's, *The Runaway* in light of its importance as social and cultural performance, and *The Belle's Stratagem* as an illustration of the connectedness between life and theatre along with its suggestion of women finding equality in marriage and as an assertion of British character, I wish now to consider Cowley's last comedy, *The Town Before You*, to discuss how theatre had changed her view of the world and how Cowley had changed British understanding of theatre.

### **Hannah Cowley's *The Town Before You* (1795)**

After *The Belle's Stratagem* Cowley continued to write and experiment with her plays with varying degrees of success. She wrote a series of comedies, including, *Which is the Man?* (1782/1783), *A Bold Stroke for a Husband* (1783/1784), *More Ways Than One* (1783/1784), *A School for Greybeards* (1786/1786), *A Day in Turkey* (1791/1792) and *The Town Before You* (1794/1795). Never completely satisfied with her relegation into the world of comedy, Cowley continually sought out new techniques for pushing the limits on how she commented on and criticized British society and politics. In 1783, when her husband Thomas left to work for the British East India Company Cowley had already produced nine of her plays. Yet since the

majority of her plays focused on domestic happiness and the need for women to actively engage in choosing a compatible equal, it seems ironic at the very least that Cowley, herself, did not seem to experience such wedded bliss. She produced six more plays (three of her plays were either staged or published for the first time in 1783), with one of these plays, *A Bold Stroke for a Husband*, telling the story of Don Carlo, who has fled his wife, Victoria, but who ultimately repents and returns to her. Unfortunately this never happened for Cowley.

By the end of her career, Cowley had tired of the theatre and the demands for the vapid humor audiences expected. Writing in her Preface to *The Town Before You* (1795), Cowley announced her departure as author from the British stage, as she prepared her publication of *The Town Before You* at “home”;

After flights into different Climates, and, in one instance, retrograding into a long past Age, the Author’s Muse returns—to close her dramatic career at home. Perhaps, after her long course, on a flagging wing if compared with herself—a test which is severe in proportion to an Author’s own Merits!<sup>185</sup>

Curiously, in an edition published in London in 1795, Cowley dedicates her play to a Mrs. Frushard of Calcutta. Cowley also acknowledges that she changed the play at the last minute to accommodate an ill Mrs. Pope and that her alteration resulted in some of the best comedy between Tippy and his Landlady that the play possesses.<sup>186</sup> *The Town Before You*, written during the French Revolution, saw moderate success with its premier, receiving nine performances during its initial season at the Covent Garden Theatre. A revised version of the play “had a magnificent house” when it was staged again in December. *The Oracle and Public Advertiser* claimed, “such boxes have hardly been seen during the season. Considering the time of year, this is a circumstance highly honourable for the Comedy—and the applause with which it went off was still more so.”<sup>187</sup> Yet compared with the premier of *The Belle’s Stratagem* fourteen years earlier with twenty-eight initial performances, *The Town Before You* may have been quite a disappointment to Cowley, who had born public censure and criticism both for her work as a

woman and her work as an author, and whose long career spanning two decades may no longer have been either financially necessary or emotionally rewarding by the late 1790s. In her final play written during a period when Britain was greatly concerned with France's designs on England and the rise of the Napoleonic Wars, Cowley denigrated London society. Disillusioned by social changes that demanded extravagant, low-comedic entertainments, she promised to cease writing for the stage, ending her almost twenty-year career as a professional playwright. No longer did Cowley envision theatre as a place where wit and wisdom entertained and informed audiences. In a 1795 published version of the play, Cowley presents her disappointment, claiming,

LAUGH! LAUGH! LAUGH! Is the demand: Not a word must be uttered that looks like instruction, or a sentence which ought to be remembered. From a Stage, in such a state, it is time to withdraw; but I call on my younger contemporaries, I invoke the rising generation, to *correct* a taste which, to be gratified, demands neither genius or intellect;— which asks only a happy knack at inventing TRICK. I adjure them to restore to the Drama SENSE, OBSERVATION, WIT, LESSON! and to teach our Writers to respect their own talents...Should the luckless Bard stumble on a reflection, or a sentiment, the audience yawn, and wait for the next tumble from a chair, or a tripping up of the heels, to put them into attention. Surely I shall be forgiven for satirizing myself; I have *made* such things, and I blush to have made them...Let Sadler's Wells and the Circus empty themselves of their performers to furnish our Stage; the expence to Managers will be less, and their business will be carried on better.<sup>188</sup>

While she, herself, was known to produce “Laughing Comedies” as previously suggested, her comedies were mixed with social and cultural commentary, not the buffoonery and low humor beginning to take over the stage. Under Sheridan's management, the Drury Lane Theatre had been demolished in 1791 and was newly opened in 1794, the much larger theatre could accommodate 3600 souls and incorporated the latest technological advancements that made antics and melodramatic performances possible. Instead of being about enlightening the public, Cowley acknowledged instead that theatre had become all about the profit. Certainly for Cowley, the draw of theatre, the desire to inform and entertain audiences and a wish to consider the art of writing plays as a respectable literary endeavor was no longer viable. And theatre wasn't just changing

for Cowley, it was changing throughout the Anglophone transatlantic world. Yet for one last time, in *The Town Before You* Cowley took a jab at contemporary British society in an effort to make her voice heard.

*The Town Before You* in many ways seems a return to late seventeenth-century theatre with its cross-dressing characters and plot twists. Yet the most memorable of these characters, Tippy, the transvestite con-artist who fills the play with his antics, is very much of the present with his *Bon Ton* associations and commentary on contemporary British society. Tippy, as flamboyant as he is, reflects flamboyant cross-dressing female characters in Cowley's other plays. In *Who's the Dupe?* a male character named Granger performs the role of female mantua-maker. In *Bold Stroke for a Husband* the servant Gaspar claims that at home he is "always Queen Cleopatra" and "hits her off to a nicety."<sup>189</sup> Tippy in his fun-loving cross-dressing, frolicsome larking about is a long way from Mercy Otis Warren's serious and classically drawn Republican characters of either her earlier propaganda plays or her later tragedies. Yet Tippy does represent much of what Cowley (who was privy to interact with London's high society) thought of London's *Bon Ton*, a select group of London's social elite during the Regency Period (including the aristocracy, peers, wealthy merchants and bankers), also known as the reign of George IV. Literally the term *Bon Ton* in French means good manners or good form and indeed the *Ton* was known for its fashion, etiquette, social interactions, manners, and frequenters of all places opulent and fashionable, including places like Almack's. Cowley makes mention of Almack's in *The Belle's Stratagem*, when Courtall is requested to take his cousins there. Almack's was a social club popular with *The Ton* that admitted both men and women, privy to the upper-classes, and part of the London "scene" during the social season.

Cowley's comedy is importantly filled with unsympathetic social commentary. In one of the opening conversations, Mrs. Fancourt claims that she is tired of having philosophers rant and rave about the inadequacies of the rich, and she equates her husband's increasing poverty with his

diminished virtues. “For my part,” she says, “I believe there is as much goodness amongst persons of fortune, as amongst the poor—and I do not see why the power of dressing elegantly, and living in well educated society, should debase the heart, or weaken the understanding!”<sup>190</sup> Later, Fancourt claims, “Hang me if I would be troubled with the first rate character, any more than with a first rate beauty—it would only create envy, and my friends would never rest ‘till they had robb’d me of it.”<sup>191</sup> When Mrs. Bullrush ask Tippy to pay rent, he shows her money but gives her none. She tells Tippy she does not like the sort of company he keeps, claiming: “They seem most of them to be men who live by their wits.” Tippy smartly answers, “Yes; --I like to have my wits about me.”<sup>192</sup> Tippy recounts impersonating Lord Beechgrove and living on his account, “took a chaise and four, and bade them whisk me to the Royal Hotel, Pall Mall. Away we flash’d; roads all mud—horses plunging—post-boys cutting; measured Finchley Common in seventeen minutes ten seconds...The waiters recognized my Lordship, gave me the best apartments, the very rooms the Turkish Ambassador had, and there I lived in first style.”<sup>193</sup> And Tippy also reveals his trickery involves dressing “under the disguise of a petticoat...I exchange my club for a distaff, or like Achilles, transform my surtout to a gauze robe, and my waistcoat to a lace tucker.”<sup>194</sup>

*The Town Before You* cleverly reveals a cast of contemporary London characters including the pompous aristocrat, conniving cross-dressing con man, a social climber, and a lady sculptor, Lady Horatia Horton, whose sculptures are criticized as unrealistic. Cowley is herself the character of Horton, suggesting that she anticipates that her own work of art, *The Town Before You*, will be conceived to be un-lifelike. Cowley’s play ends with a patriotic speech given by Asgill (who is in love with Horatia and ultimately is accepted by her), who admits he would become a sailor once again were he to be called up. Asgill’s speech, full of jingoistic nationalism, is worth repeating in full as a return to the idea that Cowley’s plays were not simple comedies

meant purely for entertainment but were much more complicated works of literature intended to highlight social, cultural *and* political discourse;

Misjudge me not! I, insensible to beauty, and to love! O! my glowing soul confesses their force, and adores their power. Yet the enthusiasm which seized me, when I trod the deck of the Victory, can never be chill'd! In the glorious tars around me, valour, intrepidity, heroism, shone forth with all their fires; they slashed through my heart! And, I swear, that should my country need my assistance, I will again resume the trowsers [sic] and sail before the mast, wherever she bids her cannon roar, or her proud pendant fly, Ah! Repose on *us!* And when you look on the gallant spirits, who do honour to this habit, let every fear subside; for, whilst the fear flows, and English sailors are *themselves*, ENGLAND MUST BE THE MISTRESS OF THE GLOBE!<sup>195</sup>

In this, her last effort to appeal to British audiences, Cowley honors the English sailor for heroism, for valor, and for making England “Mistress of the globe.” Coming to the London stage on the tails of the American Revolution, this is certainly an interesting comment, and Britain would once again engage in war with American in 1812, but Cowley clearly presents her audience with a strong and believable national hero is Asgill, and a likeable heroine in Horatia with her desire to recreate life, just as Cowley does with her plays. Yet even in spite of her patriotic speech, her flamboyant cross-dressing con artist with his outlandish (even for the time) antics and quippy speeches, *The Town Before You* (even recognizing, including and identifying the audience in the title of her play), was not as well received as Cowley had hoped. The continued success and production of her previous thirteen plays, particularly *The Belle's Stratagem*, nonetheless secured her family financially and allowed Cowley to retire from actively writing plays just as she became increasingly disappointed with the rising taste in London audiences for melodramatic “tricks.” Following the staging of *The Town Before You*, After Cowley quite she continued to rework her plays for publication.

Cowley retired to Tiverton and away from public life where she died in 1809. Five of her most popular plays, *Who's the Dupe?* (1779), *The Belle's Stratagem* (1780), *Which Is the Man?* (1782), *A Bold Stroke for a Husband* (1783), and *More Ways than One* (1784) were staged popularly throughout the transatlantic world. *Who's the Dupe?*, for example, was performed nine

times in Philadelphia between 22 January 1790 and 12 December 1796, including the official opening of Thomas Wignell's Chestnut Street Theatre on 17 February 1794. *The Belle's Stratagem* was performed six times in Philadelphia alone between 24 May 1790 and 16 April 1798. *Which Is the Man?* received one performance in that city on 16 May 1792, and *A Bold Stroke for a Husband* received three performances between 13 October 1795 and 9 March 1796. *More Ways than One* garnered six performances in Philadelphia between 20 December 1790 and 9 August 1793.<sup>196</sup> Clearly Cowley knew how to entertain and engage Anglophone audiences throughout the transatlantic world and while most of her plays were "laughing" comedies, she never ceased to provide moral and intellectual lessons within her clever dialogue.

### **Conclusions**

In 1702, almost three-quarters of a century before Warren and Cowley began publishing their work, an anonymous author clearly displeased with the idea of having women playwrights producing plays claimed simply, "there's no Feminine for the Latin word [author], 'tis entirely of the Masculine Gender, and the Language won't bear such a thing as a She-Author."<sup>197</sup> However, for both Warren and Cowley, theatre served as an important outlet for their social, cultural and political views. Both Mercy Otis Warren and Hannah Cowley used theatre to engage in cultural diplomacy. Contemporary events shaped their understanding of their world and in turn these events made their way into their plays; their responses very much depended on their physical location and on the social, cultural and political atmosphere each playwright experienced. Warren utilized a style associated with Republican Classicism that relied on the highest form of drama. She argued for America to uphold the tenets of republicanism, virtue and truth, even after the Revolution ended and the formation of a new country and new government began. Warren attempted to forge connections within colonial America in order to unite patriots against what she

believed was the repressive governmental control imposed on America by Britain. Her work circulated throughout the colonies, was published in Jamaica, and was sent abroad to England. Warren's plays, while they are at times satirical, even comical, are not light comedies meant to entertain audiences but rather served as polemical pieces meant to inform readers by engaging them in public civic discourse, and in doing so forge intercolonial sympathies and cohesiveness. Indeed, in complimenting Warren on her play, *Ladies of Castille*, Alexander Hamilton's comments mentioned at the beginning of this section that "in the career of dramatic composition at least, female genius in the United States has outstripped the Male" say much about how men and women worked to engage political, social and cultural conversations and that perhaps, as Hamilton suggested, women did manage to lead the way through their dramatical works. Juxtaposed with plays by Hannah Cowley, Warren's plays appear to reflect the much more engaged political voice that emerged on the American landscape during the 1770s revolutionary upheaval.

On the other hand, Cowley's romantic "laughing" comedies (and even her less successful tragedies) suggest that during the last three decades of the eighteenth century, London audiences sought out light entertainment that made them laugh rather than think. Cowley's plays also confirm, at least culturally, that London audiences were likely far less concerned with the events of the American Revolution than were audiences in America. Yet Cowley's plays are not as simplistic as one might think and consistently make important comments on contemporary social and political issues. For example she presented London's *Bon Ton* in satire, she argued that wives should be equals to husbands, she made patriotic speeches, and she defended herself publicly when she felt she had been mistreated as a playwright. That she wrote in a different style and for a different purpose came from necessity. Unlike Warren, who enjoyed a successful and long married life, Cowley was abandoned by her husband and needed to make money to support her family. Her plays had to succeed. She even admitted her own folly as a writer of laughing plays in

the Preface to her last play, *The Town Before You*, and acknowledged that “laughing, laughing, laughing” was all that audiences now desired as the century came to a close. Perhaps when Adams had told Warren that her play was not wanted because nothing “American” was wanted in Britain in the 1780s and 1790s, really it was not Warren’s “Americanness” that so offended British audiences but that she wrote tragedies without this sense of laughter and lightness. Cowley’s two tragedies, *Albina* and *The Fate of Sparta* (not unlike Warren’s *The Sack of Rome* written at almost the same time), written a dozen years apart, suggest that in spite of facing public scrutiny for her choice to write tragedies, she dared to challenge contemporary views of what women playwrights might accomplish. As successful authors recognized for their works during their lifetimes, both Warren and Cowley used theatre to enact cultural cohesion both to entertain and to inform.

Following the end of the American Revolution theatre in America grew in popularity in ways never before experienced. The anti-British feelings that extended to theatre began to disappear in the 1790s when Americans looked to theatre to help them reestablish Anglo cultural connections. Ironically, while theatre had often been proscribed by colonial governments on moral, political and religious grounds for much of the eighteenth century, Anglophone theatre during the Revolutionary Era—particularly as polemical works—became essential in helping America begin to imagine itself as a unified nation rather than as a collection of colonies. Many individuals who identified as Britons prior to the American Revolution looked to Rome (republicanism) and France (undergoing its own social and political revolution during the 1790s) following the Revolution for ideas on how to craft their identity and continued to be used as a way of informing, educating, and connecting a very diverse American audience base. New theatres opened in Philadelphia (1792), Baltimore (1781 and 1794), New York (1771 and 1798), and Boston (1794). British acting companies including Lewis Hallam Jr.s’ American Company returned to America post-Revolution.<sup>198</sup> These companies in turn produced “American” plays like

Royal Tyler's five-act comedy of manners, *The Contrast*. And because of growing interest in theatre, new acting companies formed, like Thomas Wignell's company at the Chestnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia.<sup>199</sup> In spite of Britain's decade-long military engagement with America, the London stage made little mention of the altercation other than the infrequent appearance of officers or travelers from America—characters regularly appearing in plays regardless of war. Instead British playwrights posed socio-political questions in the face of the French Revolution, a war far more threatening to the British in its proximity since Britons were long-accustomed to live and travel in France and the two countries shared cultural interests like theatre, art, music, fashion, even though they were not directly connected through language or political ideology. (See Appendix D)

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Mercy Otis Warren, *The Adulateur* (Boston: Printed and sold at the New Printing Office Near Concert Hall, 1773). Act I, scene i.

<sup>2</sup> See Tice L. Miller, *Entertaining the Nation: American Drama in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2007), 26.

<sup>3</sup> While *The Runaway* presented London audiences in 1776 with a light domestic comedy that also questioned social customs, Benjamin Edes printed another broadside printed in Watertown, Massachusetts, the so-called "test-oath" related to an act passed by the Massachusetts General Court on 1 May 1776. The "test-oath" responded to the stirrings of war with a far more direct challenge, "We the subscribers, do each of us severally for ourselves, profess, testify and declare before God and the world, that we verily believe that the war, resistance and opposition in which the United American Colonies are now engaged, against the fleets and armies of Great-Britain, is on the part of said colonies, just and necessary." Broadside, Printed by Benjamin Edes in Watertown, Massachusetts, 1776. *Early American Imprints, Series 1*, no. 14840. Accessed 10 October 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Hannah Cowley, *The Runaway* (London: Printed for I. Dodsley in Pall Mall; T. Becket, and T. Cadell in the Strand; T. Longman in Paternoster Row & Carnan & Newberry in St. Paul's Church Yard, n.d.), 2.

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

<sup>6</sup> The Theatre Licensing Act of 1737, as discussed previously, likely changed the contentious nature of theatre so that public performances no longer challenged political or social institutions, leaving it to novelists to fill that void. Thus many of the plays performed and certainly most of the plays written between 1737 and 1800 in Britain were domestic comedies, a genre that appealed to women playwrights and at which they were quite astute. The plays written and produced by women beginning with Mercy Otis Warren's propaganda plays in 1773, publicly challenged the British government and questioned late eighteenth-century Anglo social norms.

<sup>7</sup> Melinda C. Finberg, *Eighteenth-Century Women Dramatists*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), xlvii.

<sup>8</sup> Cowley's play provides lively banter and cheekily comments about the state of marriage in Britain, for example, "The charms that helped to catch the husband are generally *laid by*, one after another till the lady grows a downright wife and then runs crying to her mother because she has transformed her *lover* into a downright husband." Hannah Cowley, *The Belle's Strategem*, Act IV, scene ii, line 21-25, as quoted in *The Broadway Anthology of Restoration and Early Eighteenth-Century Drama*, eds. J. Douglas Canfield and Maja-Lisa von Sneidern (Plymouth, UK: Broadview Press, 2001), 1862.

<sup>9</sup> For biographies on Mercy Otis Warren see Rosemarie Zagarrri, *A Woman's Dilemma: Mercy Otis Warren and the American Revolution* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2014); Nancy Rubin Stuart, *The Muse of the Revolution: The Secret Pen of Mercy Otis Warren and the Founding of a Nation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2009); Zoe Detsi-Diamanti, *Early American Women Dramatists, 1775-1860* (New York: Psychology Press, 1998); Alice Brown, *Mercy Otis Warren* (New York: Charles Scribner and Sons, 1896); Jennifer Blitzin Gillis, *Mercy Otis Warren: Author and Historian* (North Mankato, KS: Capstone, 2005). For biographies on Hannah Cowley see Angela Escott, *The Celebrated Hannah Cowley: Experiments in Dramatic Genre, 1776-1794* (New York: Routledge, 2015); Melinda C Finberg, ed. Introduction. *Eighteenth-Century Women Dramatists*. (Oxford; New York: Oxford UP, 2001); Ellen Donkin, "The Paper War of Hannah Cowley and Hannah More." *Curtain Calls: British and American Women and the Theater, 1660-1820*. Mary Anne Schofield, and Cecilia Macheski, eds. (Athens: Ohio UP, 1991); Frederick M. Link, "Introduction." *The Plays of Hannah Cowley*. Frederick M. Link, ed. New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1979; Jane Williams, *The Literary Women of England. Including a Biographical Epitome of All the Most Eminent to the Year 1700; and Sketches of the Poetesses to the Year 1850; with Extracts from Their Works, and Critical Remarks* (London: Saunders, Otley, & Co., 1861).

<sup>10</sup> Hannah Cowley wrote in her Prologue to *The Runaway*, apologizing for her writing, but also claiming that if men scorn her work, their women will punish them; "O lift! A tale it is, not verry common; / Our Poet of to-night, in faith's a—Woman, / A woman, too, untutored in the School, / Nor Aristotle knows, nor scarce a rule...smile on folly from a Woman's pen: / Then 'tis the Ladies cause, there I'm secure; / Let him who hisses, no soft Nymph endure; / May he who frowns, be frown'd on by his Goddess, / From Pearls, and Brussels Point, to Maids in Boddice." See Hannah Cowley, *The Runaway* (London: I. Dodsley, n.d.), prologue.

<sup>11</sup> "Warren-Adams Letters, Being Chiefly a Correspondence Among John Adams, Samuel Adams, and James Warren," II, *Massachusetts Historical Society Collections*, LXXIII (Cambridge, 1925), 326; ALS, Papers of the Society of the Cincinnati, Library of Congress. <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Hamilton/01-08-02-0465>

<sup>12</sup> Nina Baym, "Mercy Otis Warren's Gendered Melodrama and Revolution," *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 90 (1991), 531-554. Baym argues, "If the Revolution had been fought exclusively on the battlefield it might have remained beyond women's scope. But since it came home from the start to women, they were virtually obliged to think and speak out about it. Womanly thinking, as Warren exemplifies it, cannot lead to pacifism. The war took its shape from those monsters of moral evil the English, who also started it. Philosophical reflection about the interrelation between morality and political ideology leads to the conclusion that the English could not have fought in any other way, since they were monarchists. Therefore, American women could not do otherwise than support the patriots against the English." Ultimately, Baym presents Warren's republican ideology as integral to being a woman, indeed that republicanism valued women most. Baym argues "To the extent that Warren believed that the republican form of government was the only political system that valued women, her view of sexual difference and her commitment to enunciating republican principles converged and reinforced each other. The idea that women had no stake in politics and government was, from her perspective, absurd."

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 554.

<sup>14</sup> Warren's plays contained few female characters and were concerned primarily with the growing dissatisfaction of Anglo-American colonists (particularly those citizens residing near Boston) with Britain's increasing political presence. Two other political plays attributed to Warren published during the same period, *The Blockheads* (1776) and *The Motley Assembly* (1779), address similar themes, though scholars

such as Jeffrey Richards and Sharron Harris have contested the language and imagery in each of these plays as being altogether too vulgar and coarse to have been produced by the gentrified and conservative Warren.

<sup>15</sup> In 1760, George III became king of England. His reign was shaped by four wars: the Seven Years' War (1754-1763), the American Revolution (1765-1783), the Irish Rebellion (1798), and the French Revolution (1789-1799). The first of those conflicts began the year that Mercy Otis Warren married her brother, James Otis's, Harvard friend, James Warren. While George III ineptly juggled his political diplomacy with America, Mercy Otis Warren and her family engaged in political discourse that engaged with Britain's governance over colonial America. In 1763, at the end of the Seven Years' War, Frances Sheridan's (mother of playwright and Drury Lane theatre manager Richard Brinsley Sheridan) five-act comedy, *The Discovery* was produced, a play David Garrick considered to be the greatest comedy of the age. For more on Frances Sheridan see *The Plays of Frances Sheridan*, eds. Robert Goode Hogan and Jerry C. Beasley, (Dover: University of Delaware Press, 1984), 13.

<sup>16</sup> In an attempt to stage public plays, the British military claimed that British legal precedents such as the English Licensing Act of 1747 trumped local colonial rulings. See Don B. Wilmet and Tice L. Miller, *The Cambridge Guide to American Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 71.

<sup>17</sup> James Rivington, *A Dialogue between a Southern Delegate and his Spouse on His Return from the Grand Continental Congress. A Fragment. Inscribed to the Married Ladies of America* (New York: by James Rivington, 1774), 9.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

<sup>19</sup> Quinn, *Staging Governance*, 30.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, 30-35.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, 1.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>26</sup> Hannah Cowley's comedies were particularly interesting to American audiences who could identify with her strong-willed yet conventional female characters. *Who's the Dupe?* was staged in Philadelphia nine times during the 1790s, *The Belle's Stratagem* seven times, *More Ways than One* six times, *A Bold Stroke for a Husband* three times and *Which is the Man?* appeared onstage once in Philadelphia during the last decade of the eighteenth century. See Pollock, *The Philadelphia Theatre* for further reference to these plays.

<sup>27</sup> The first known play published in America was *Androboros* (1714), by Robert Hunter (1666-1734). General Hunter served as governor of New York and New Jersey and later became governor of Jamaica. In the same vein as Warren's much later plays, Hunter's play ridiculed two of his political enemies, Colonel Francis Nicholson and Dr. William Vesey, Rector of Trinity Church, New York. Later James Ralph (1705?-1762), a friend of Benjamin Franklin (with whom he traveled to England in 1724 and who, once in England, never returned to America), wrote *The Fashionable Lady; or the Harlequin's Opera* in 1730, which was performed in London at Goodman's Fields (the theatre William Hallam would eventually manage). *The Fashionable Lady* may have been the first play written by a native of America that was published and performed professionally, albeit in London, rather than in America. Ralph subsequently wrote several other plays, *The Fall of the Earl of Essex* (1731), also performed at Goodman's Fields and published in London; *The Cornish Squire* (1734), performed at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane and published in London; and *The Astrologer* (1744) performed at Drury Lane and printed in London. An anonymous farce, *The Suspected Daughter; or, Jealous father*, was published in Boston in 1755, and was labeled by one contemporary an "ante-Revolutionary publication." There is no record that this play was

ever produced. Frank Pierce Hill, *American Plays Printed 1714-1830: A Bibliographic Record* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1971), 51, 89-90, 119.

<sup>28</sup> Upon the death of her parents when she was about twelve years old, Lennox moved to London. Her plays became the first known ones performed and written by a woman who had lived in America. The first of her plays, *Angelica; or, Quixote in petticoats, a comedy in two acts* (1758) was privately printed for Lennox and was a dramatization of her popular novel, *The Female Quixote; or, The Adventures of Arabella* (1752). Lennox's *Philander; A dramatic pastoral, by the author of the female Quixote* (1758) was given a more general publishing, likely due to the success of her first play. In 1769, Lennox's comedy, *The Sister* was published in two editions and played at the Theatre Royal Covent Garden, London on 18 February 1769, though this was the only recorded performance. Notably, this particular play is considered the first written by a native of America, male or female, to be translated into German and included an epilogue by Anglo-Irish playwright, novelist and poet Oliver Goldsmith (1730-1774), already famous for his novel *The Vicar of Wakefield*. Another of Lennox's plays, *Old City Manners* (1775), an adaptation of Ben Johnson's play, *Eastward, Ho* (1605), was produced by David Garrick at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane. Interestingly, before Lennox attempted to write for theatre, she had attempted to act, albeit with little success, though she did receive a benefit night at the Haymarket Theatre in a 1750 performance of Congreve's *The Mourning Bride* (1697). Hill, *American Plays Printed 1714-1830*, 59.

<sup>29</sup> While *The Disappointment* became the first American play to be announced in print for production, Godfrey's *The Prince of Parthia* was actually the first produced by a professional company of players.

<sup>30</sup> As referenced in Pollock, *The Philadelphia Theatre in the Eighteenth Century*, 96.

<sup>31</sup> Among the principal actresses in this 1767 premier of *The Prince of Parthia*—and, more importantly, the premier of the first American drama to be professionally produced on the American stage—were some of Douglass's most important performers: Mrs. Morris, Miss Wainwright and Margaret Cheer (fl. 1767-1793). Margaret Cheer, who would become the leading lady in Douglass's company ultimately replacing Mrs. Douglass, first appeared onstage in Philadelphia just the year before on November 21, 1766 as Catherine in David Garrick's rewriting of Shakespeare into *Catherine and Petruchio*. Pollock, *The Philadelphia Theatre in the Eighteenth Century*, 85. "Days of Playing" were consistently Monday, Wednesday and Friday in Philadelphia and newspapers, published on Thursdays, announced the play would appear the following Friday.

<sup>32</sup> The production of Godfrey's *The Prince of Parthia* precedes the publication of Mercy Otis Warren's political plays by about five years. However, Warren's plays, unlike Godfrey's play, were not performed, but printed (at least initially) serially in newspapers. Following this one performance (that Godfrey never lived to see) no further record exists of its being performed onstage in Philadelphia or anywhere else in America during the eighteenth century.

<sup>33</sup> For more on the British Caribbean during the American Revolution see Andrew O'Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided: The American Revolution and the British Caribbean* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000). O'Shaughnessy argues that "the defense of the West Indies led to the British defeat in the American Revolutionary War." (xii) O'Shaughnessy also argues that "the division of British American after the American Revolution had major implications for both the West Indies and the United States. The islands and mainland colonies were previously part of the same polity, which was artificially severed by the American War. Their trade was officially restricted after the war, resulting in less interaction. The Exile of black American loyalists from the United States played an influential role in the spread of Afro-Christianity in the British West Indies. The division also helped the cause of abolitionists in both Britain and the United States; it more than halved the number of slaves in the British Empire; made slavery appear virtually peculiar to the South within the United States; and prevented the island and southern planters from forming a common lobby against the abolitionists. The failure of the British West Indies to join the American Revolution therefore had significance for the history of slavery in the West Indies and the United States." (xii) O'Shaughnessy argues that twenty-six British colonies existed in America in 1776, including eleven colonies in the Caribbean that were among the wealthiest British colonies: Jamaica, Antigua, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, Nevis, St. Kitts, St. Vincent,

Tortola, and Tobago. Trade and social ties connected these island colonies to the mainland, where most colonists lived within two hundred miles of the shore and most major cities lined the coast. The plantation system of the islands reflected that of the southern colonies on the mainland, making them more closely connected (at least through social and economic systems) than the southern colonies were with New England. Yet most white plantation owners chose not to support the American cause.

<sup>34</sup> Maud Macdonald Hutcheson, "Mercy Warren, 1728-1814," *William and Mary Quarterly* 10 (1953): 378-402; Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill, 1980); Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980); and Joan Hoff Wilson and Sharon L. Billinger, "Mercy Otis Warren: Playwright, Poet, and Historian of the American Revolution," in *Female Scholars: A Tradition of Learned Women Before 1800*, ed. J. R. Brink (Montreal, 1980), 161-82. These scholars argue that Warren was likely the most emancipated woman of her day. Friedman and Shaffer, independently and together, are the critics who see a contrast between Warren's behavior and her expressed view of women as sign of feminine game playing. Cohen, in "Politics of Language," argues that Warren was simply unaware of her own best gender interests. Emily Stipes Watts, in *The Poetry of American Women from 1632 to 1945* (Austin, 1977), is the only critic to hold that Warren applies republican concepts of liberty to women. Nina Baym argues that, "Linda K. Kerber, in "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," *Journal of American History* 75 (1988): 9-39, shows that the spheres were never fixed and never fully real, but always in flux and always as much prescriptive as descriptive. The dominant phrase for the ideology of women's sphere in the revolutionary and immediate postrevolutionary periods is probably "republican motherhood," not "true womanhood," but this phrase, too, refers to a concept that is both rhetorical and unstable." Baym, "Mercy Otis Warren's Gendered Melodrama and Revolution," notes.

<sup>35</sup> Some college students staged plays from the standard British canon that had been performed by Anglophone professional and semi-professional companies during the eighteenth century, including Shakespeare, Joseph Addison, Christopher Marlowe as well as classical Greek plays. Theatre was even brought into the homes of wealthier colonists who possessed miniature theatres ranging in size from the hand-held variety to large boxes that rested on the floor for observation. These intricately engraved and decorated box scenes contained a peepshow of characters in a miniature theatrical setting, viewed through a hole at one end. The Houghton Library's Harvard Theatre Collection recently acquired three such works by eighteenth-century engraver and printer Martin Engelbrecht. See <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/houghton/2015/08/14/early-home-entertainment-engelbrechts-miniature-theatres/> Accessed 28 October 2015.

<sup>36</sup> George Washington to John Hancock (Circular), 11 June 1783. A long-time admirer of theatre, Washington attended dozens of plays during his lifetime, including a performance in Barbados in 1751 of *The London Merchant; or, The History of George Barnwell*, a 1771 performance of *The Recruiting Officer* in Dumfries, Virginia, a performance of *The West Indian* by the American Company in Annapolis, Maryland in 1772, *Love in a Camp, or Patrick in Prussia* performed in Philadelphia in 1787, and an impressive three performances of *School for Scandal*—twice in New York City 1789, 1791 and once in Philadelphia in 1792, as well as Shakespeare's ever-popular tragedy, *Julius Caesar* in New York in 1790. <http://gwpapers.virginia.edu/documents/george-washington-to-john-hancock-circular-11-june-1783/>

<sup>37</sup> As quoted in Rosemarie Zagari, *A Woman's Dilemma: Mercy Otis Warren and the American Revolution*, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2014), 45.

<sup>38</sup> See Ray Raphael, "The Righteous Revolution of Mercy Otis Warren," *The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History* <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/creating-new-government/essays/righteous-revolution-mercy-otis-warren> Accessed 27 October 2015.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Adams continued, “It is the Form of Government, which gives the decisive Colour to the Manners of the People, more than any other Thing. Under a well regulated Commonwealth, the People must be wise virtuous and cannot be otherwise. Under a Monarchy they may be as vicious and foolish as they please, nay they cannot but be vicious and foolish. As Politicks therefore is the Science of human Happiness, and human Happiness is clearly best promoted by Virtue, what thorough Politician can hesitate, who has a new Government to build whether to prefer a Commonwealth or a Monarchy? But Madam there is one Difficulty, which I know not how to get over. Virtue and Simplicity of Manners, are indispensably necessary in a Republic, among all orders and Degrees of Men. But there is So much Rascallity, so much Venality and Corruption, so much Avarice and Ambition, such a Rage for Profit and Commerce among all Ranks and Degrees of Men even in America, that I sometimes doubt whether there is public Virtue enough to support a Republic. There are two Vices most detestably predominant in every Part of America that I have yet seen, which are as incompatible with the Spirit of a Commonwealth as Light is with Darkness, I mean Servility and Flattery. A genuine Republican can no more fawn and cringe than he can domineer. Shew me the American who can not do all. I know two or Three I think, and very few more.” Copley painted Warren’s portrait in 1763, making the reference to this painter more significant. In addition, Adams’ comments reflect the popular colonial attitude that Monarchy was associated with immoral behavior that makes Adams choose Republic over Monarchy. From John Adams to Mercy Otis Warren 8 January 1776, RC (MHi:Warren-Adams Coll.); docketed: “J Adams Esqr Jany 8th 1776”; in another hand: “Braintree.” National Archives, Founders Online; <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/06-03-02-0202>.

<sup>41</sup> Located in the Massachusetts Historical Society Papers of John Adams and Mercy Otis Warren, RC (MHi: Warren-Adams Coll); docketed by Mrs. Warren: “April 16 1776 Government & Commerce”; docketed in two other hands: “Hon. Jno. Adams April 1776” and “J Adams Esqr April 1776.”

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Warren’s letter continues: “I wish to know every circumstance of the guilty affair,—is it possible that we have men among us under the guise of officers of the Crown, who have become open assassins?—Have they with a band of ruffians at the heels, attacked a gentleman alone and unarmed with a design to take away his life? Thus it is reported:— and are these the *conservators* of peace? We knew before that the business on which this armament was sent hither was detestable:—that it was abhorred by every one, who had any remains of integrity, humanity, or any ideas of freedom. Yet though we knew their errand was to uphold villainy, and protect villains—I believe few expected they would carry their audacity so far as to stand by and [?] the miscreant, to spill the blood of citizens, who criminate the designs, and their measures... You will excuse the freedom of my pen, when you consider it held by one who has your welfare more at heart, after a very few exceptions, than that of any other person in the world. I hope soon to hear that you are restored to perfect health and from your usual affection and attention. I expect this intelligence from your own hand as soon as you are able to write.” See Mercy Otis Warren, *Selected Letters* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 3.

<sup>44</sup> For discussions of Mercy Otis Warren’s life, her relationship with her brother James, her marriage to James Warren and her political leanings, see Alice Brown, *Mercy Otis Warren Nancy Rubin Stuart, The Muse of the Revolution: The Secret Pen of Mercy Otis Warren and the Founding of a Nation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2009); Rosemarie Zagari, *A Woman’s Dilemma; Mercy Otis Warren and the American Revolution* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 2015); Lester H. Cohen, “Mercy Otis Warren: the Politics of Language and the Aesthetics of Self.” *American Quarterly* 1983 35(5): 481–98; Kate Davies. *Catharine Macaulay and Mercy Otis Warren: The Revolutionary Atlantic and the Politics of Gender*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005; Lawrence J. Friedman, and Shaffer, Arthur H. “Mercy Otis Warren and the Politics of Historical Nationalism.” *New England Quarterly* 1975 48(2): 194–215; Jeffrey H. Richards, *Mercy Otis Warren*. (Twayne’s United States Authors Series, no. 618.), 1995.

<sup>45</sup> Warren, *Selected Letters*, xiv.

<sup>46</sup> Heidi Brayman Hackel and Catherine E. Kelley, *Reading Women: Literacy, Authorship, and Culture in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 117.

- <sup>47</sup> Ibid, 120.
- <sup>48</sup> Warren, *Selected Letters*, xix.
- <sup>49</sup> Mercy Otis Warren, *The Adulateur, a Tragedy, as it is now acted in Upper Servia* (Boston: Printed and sold at the New Printing Office Near Concert Hall, 1773).
- <sup>50</sup> Joseph Addison, *Cato*, Act II, scene iii
- <sup>51</sup> Ibid, Act III, scene v.
- <sup>52</sup> Ibid, Act IV, scene iv.
- <sup>53</sup> Ibid, Act II, scene iv.
- <sup>54</sup> Michael Kranish, *Flight from Monticello: Thomas Jefferson at War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 53.
- <sup>55</sup> Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*, (New York: Penguin Classics, 2003), 39.
- <sup>56</sup> Jonathan Dickinson Letter to John Adams from Princeton, 11 April 1776, *Papers of John Adams, Volume 4* in the Collection of the Massachusetts Historical Society, <https://www.masshist.org/publications/apde2/view?id=ADMS-06-04-02-0039> Accessed 5 November 2015.
- <sup>57</sup> Mark Kamrath, *Periodical literature in eighteenth-century America* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2005), 109.
- <sup>58</sup> The congressional ban on theatrical performances was enacted in October 1774 to “discourage every species of extravagance and dissipation.” See Heather S. Nathans, *Early American Theatre from the Revolution to Thomas Jefferson* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 37.
- <sup>59</sup> W. Bradford Jr. and James Madison Jr. *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (1916), 335-343. (Philadelphia: Historical Society of Pennsylvania), *Selections from the Wallace Papers* 343 [http://www.jstor.org/stable/20086274?seq=9#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](http://www.jstor.org/stable/20086274?seq=9#page_scan_tab_contents)
- <sup>60</sup> As quoted in Pollock, *The Philadelphia Theatre in the Eighteenth Century*, 131.
- <sup>61</sup> See Randall Fuller, “Theaters of the American Revolution: The Valley Forge Cato and the Meschianza in Their Transcultural Contexts,” *Early American Literature* 34 (1999), 126-146. Fuller writes, “For the ragged soldiers in Washington’s camp Addison’s tragedy offered a salient version of national destiny characterized by self-sacrifice, republican virtue, and an almost boundless devotion to the principle of liberty,” 128.
- <sup>62</sup> Evert Augustus Duyckinck, George Long Duyckinck *Cyclopædia of American Literature*, Volume 1 (New York: Charles Scribner and Sons, 1856), 287.
- <sup>63</sup> Letter from Benjamin Rush to John Adams, 13 July 1780 in the Collection of the Massachusetts Historical Society, *Papers of John Adams, Volume 9*, <https://www.masshist.org/publications/apde2/view?id=ADMS-06-09-02-0311> Accessed 5 November 2015.
- <sup>64</sup> Letter from John Adams to Abigail Adams, 16 April 1783 in the Collection of the Massachusetts Historical Society, *Adams Family Correspondance, Volume 5*, <https://www.masshist.org/publications/apde2/view?id=ADMS-04-05-02-0068> Accessed 5 November 2015.
- <sup>65</sup> Mercy Otis Warren also took on the Roman name “Marcia” for a pen name. Heckel and Kelly also suggest that “Elite women married to patriots latched onto the republican ideal of the Roman matron, who was chaste, sober, dignified, and dedicated to the selfless service of Rome” or in the case of Warren, to America. See Hackel and Kelley, *Reading Women: Literacy*, 117.
- <sup>66</sup> See Detsi-Diamanti, *Early American Women Dramatists, 1775-1860* (New York: Psychology Press, 1998), 38.

<sup>67</sup> Baym, "Mercy Otis Warren's Gendered Melodrama and Revolution," 535.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> In *The Sack of Rome*, Warren still doubts whether America is ready or strong enough to take on its new role as republican ideal. She writes,

"nations pouring from their frozen dens,  
Rough, naked boors, from every northern wild,  
Untutor'd, or by nature, or by art,  
With scarce a trait that speaks the species man,  
Except the semblance of the human form,  
Must be the chosen scourge, by heaven design'd,  
To chasten Rome for that tyrannick sway  
Usurp'd and stretch'd o'er all her wide domain,  
And proudly held by her remorseless sword;  
Her insolence, her stubbornness of soul,  
That trod down nations, trampled on the necks  
Of mighty kings." Mercy Otis Warren, *The Sack of Rome*, Act I, scene i.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, Preface.

<sup>72</sup> Warren's later dramatic works, *The Sack of Rome* and *The Ladies of Castille*, published in 1790, would again address republican values and question similar deceitful characters with their divided loyalties that she portrayed in her three earlier plays, and add warnings of corrupt governmental systems and wariness of despotic rulers. These plays, like her earlier works contain overarching themes of liberty, loyalty and virtue that Warren hopes post-war America might retain. Detsi-Diamanti, *Early American Women Dramatists*, 49-51.

<sup>73</sup> Mercy Otis Warren, *Selected Letters*, eds. Jeffrey H. Richards and Sharon M. Harris, (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 5.

<sup>74</sup> Warren, *Selected Letters*, 12-14.

<sup>75</sup> See Zagari, *A Women's Dilemma*.

<sup>76</sup> See Barbara Caine, *English Feminism, 1780–1980* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Nancy F. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); Judith Fetterly, *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983); Linda Kauffman, ed. *Gender and Theory: Dialogues on Feminist Criticism*. (London: Blackwell, 2002); Rosalind Rosenberg, *Beyond Separate Spheres: Intellectual Roots of Modern Feminism*. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale UP, 1982); Showalter, *Sister's Choice*; Laura Brown, *Ends of Empire: Women and Ideology in Early Eighteenth-Century English Literature*. (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993); Schoefeld and Macheski, eds., *Curtain Calls*; Cheryl Turner, *Living by the Pen: Women Writers in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

<sup>77</sup> Warren's anonymity also complicates the identification of authorship on a number of political plays published in the same newspapers in which Warren's plays appeared. Since copycat writing existed then as it does now, two other polemical pieces, *The Blockheads; or, The Affrighted Officers* (1776) (a play written shortly after the British withdrew from Boston in response to British General John Burgoyne's satirical play *The Blockade of Boston* (1775) that made fun of patriots and their cause) and *The Motley Assembly* (1779) have also been attributed to her though their style, language and imagery are more vulgar and unpolished than Warren's three other plays, making authorship of these last two plays by Warren highly questionable. Biographer Katharine Anthony is nonetheless convinced that Warren penned these "bold" "rowdy" and "unfeminine" satires since they reflect the style and tone of her earlier works. It is certainly possible that Warren wrote these later political plays, and as Anthony suggests, Warren may have become

bolder in her political assertions in an attempt to generate public support for the American cause, though it is outside of scope of this project to prove Warren's authorship of these works. See Miller, *Entertaining the Nation*, 26.

<sup>78</sup> Abigail Adams Letter to Mercy Otis Warren, 5 December 1773, *Adams Family Correspondence, Volume 1* in the Collection of the Massachusetts Historical Society, <https://www.masshist.org/publications/apde2/view?id=ADMS-04-01-02-0065> accessed 5 November 2015.

<sup>79</sup> Abigail Adams Letter to Mercy Otis Warren, 11 December 1773, *Adams Family Correspondence, Volume 1* in the Collection of the Massachusetts Historical Society, <https://www.masshist.org/publications/apde2/view?id=ADMS-04-01-02-0065> accessed 5 November 2015.

<sup>80</sup> On 20 October 1774, for the first time as a unified act against theatre the twelve colonies meeting as the First Continental Congress resolved that theatre was incompatible with revolution, and wrote the Articles of Association in reaction to the Intolerable Acts passed that year by Parliament in order "to obtain redress of these grievances, which threaten destruction to the lives and property of his majesty's subjects, in North-America." *The Continental Congress Association*, 20 October 1774, Article 8. <http://www.loc.gov>. Accessed 20 October 2015.

<sup>81</sup> The Continental Congress acted to "discountenance and discourage every species of extravagance and dissipation, especially all horse-racing, and all kinds of games, cock fighting, exhibitions of shews, plays, and other expensive diversions and entertainments." Among other issues concerning its members were "non-importation, non-consumption and non-exportation." Curiously, the reason to ban theatre at this moment is economic rather than moral. The entire resolution passed under the Articles of Association concerning theatre is as follows: "8. We will, in our several stations, encourage frugality, economy, and industry, and promote agriculture, arts and the manufactures of this country, especially that of wool; and will discountenance and discourage every species of extravagance and dissipation, especially all horse-racing, and all kinds of games, cock fighting, exhibitions of shews, plays, and other expensive diversions and entertainments; and on the death of any relation or friend, none of us, or any of our families will go into any further mourning-dress, than a black crepe or ribbon on the arm or hat, for gentlemen, and a black ribbon and necklace for ladies, and we will discontinue the giving of gloves and scarves at funerals." See Worthington Chauncy Ford, ed., "Thursday October 20, 1774" *Journals of the Continental Congress: 1774-1789, Volume I. 1774, 34 vols.*, (Washington D.C., Library of Congress Government Printing Office, 1904), 76, 78. For the full Articles of Association document, see also [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/contcong\\_10-20-74.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/contcong_10-20-74.asp) See Don B. Wilmet, et. al., *The Cambridge History of American Theatre: 1870-1945, Volume 2* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK, 1998), 5.

<sup>82</sup> *The Sentiments of a Foreigner on the Disputes of Great-Britain with America* (Philadelphia: Printed by James Humphreys, Junior in Front Street, 1775), 24. Early American Imprints, Series I (1639-1800) at [http://infoweb.newsbank.com.ezproxy.bpl.org/iw-search/we/Evans/?p\\_product=EAIX&p\\_theme=eai&p\\_nbid=B4FW53AHMTQ0NjkwMzM3MC4xODEwNDQ6MT0xMzoxOTIuODAuNjUuMTE2&p\\_action=doc&p\\_queryname=4&p\\_doref=v2:0F2B1FCB879B099B@EAIX-0F301471CD42AF10@14417-0F9263E6F6E3F0E0@1](http://infoweb.newsbank.com.ezproxy.bpl.org/iw-search/we/Evans/?p_product=EAIX&p_theme=eai&p_nbid=B4FW53AHMTQ0NjkwMzM3MC4xODEwNDQ6MT0xMzoxOTIuODAuNjUuMTE2&p_action=doc&p_queryname=4&p_doref=v2:0F2B1FCB879B099B@EAIX-0F301471CD42AF10@14417-0F9263E6F6E3F0E0@1) Accessed 5 November 2015.

<sup>83</sup> Humphreys (ironically, a loyalist who abandoned his business when the British left Philadelphia in 1778 but returned to it after the war), significantly altered *The History of Sir George Ellison* (known in America as *The Man of Real Sensibility*, 1774), a novel by pro-American English author, Sarah Scott, titled, *The History of Sir George Ellison* (1766). Eve Tavor Bannet argues that pro-American Scott's work is distinguished "from classical republicanism and Lockean contractualism and shows that Scotts conservatism was both less Utopian and more radical than it has seemed to previous critics." Eve Tavor Bannet, "Sarah Scott and America: Sir George Ellison, The Man of Real Sensibility, and the Squire of Horton," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, Vol. 22, no. 4, Summer 2010, 631-656; 631.

<sup>84</sup> *The Sentiments of a Foreigner on the Disputes of Great-Britain with America*, Back Matter. Early American Imprints, Series I (1639-1800) at <http://infoweb.newsbank.com.ezproxy.bpl.org/iw->

search/we/Evans/?p\_product=EAIX&p\_theme=eai&p\_nbid=B4FW53AHMTQ0NjkwMzM3MC4xODEwNDQ6MT0xMzoxOTluODAuNjUuMTE2&p\_action=doc&p\_queryname=4&p\_docrf=v2:0F2B1FCB879B099B@EAIX-0F301471CD42AF10@14417-0F9263E6F6E3F0E0@1 Accessed 5 November 2015.

<sup>85</sup> Abigail Adams Letter to Mercy Otis Warren, 5 December 1773, *Adams Family Correspondence, Volume 1* in the Collection of the Massachusetts Historical Society, <https://www.masshist.org/publications/apde2/view?id=ADMS-04-01-02-0065> accessed 5 November 2015.

<sup>86</sup> Abigail Adams Letter to Mercy Otis Warren, 11 December 1773, *Adams Family Correspondence, Volume 1* in the Collection of the Massachusetts Historical Society, <https://www.masshist.org/publications/apde2/view?id=ADMS-04-01-02-0065> accessed 5 November 2015.

<sup>87</sup> When the list of thirty-six men appointed to serve as the king's councilors arrived, an angry colonial mob managed to convince (or threaten) twenty of these men to resign their posts. However, a stalwart group of sixteen men refused to be cowed by the colonial mob, and sought protection from the British military.

<sup>88</sup> "Who actually played in *The Group* when it was given a performance is not recorded. We know, however, from records, that it was given for the delectation of the audiences assembled "nigh head quarters, at Amboyne." This evidence is on the strength of Mrs. Warren's own statement. Sanction for the statement appears on the title-pages of the New York, John Anderson, issue of 1775,[6] and the Jamaica-Philadelphia, James Humphreys, Jr., edition of the same year." See <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/29224/29224.txt>.

<sup>89</sup> See Helen Krich Chinoy, *Women in American Theatre* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2006), 126.

<sup>90</sup> Mercy Otis Warren, *The Group* (New York: Printed by John Anderson at Beckman's Slip, 1775); Mercy Otis Warren, *The Group* (Jamaica Printed, Philadelphia Reprinted: James Humphreys Junior on Fleet Street, 1775).

<sup>91</sup> Warren, *The Group, a Farce* (Boston: Printed and sold by Edes and Gill, in Queen Street, 1775).

<sup>92</sup> Warren, *The Group, a Farce* (Philadelphia: James Humphreys, 1775).

<sup>93</sup> Abigail Adams to Mercy Otis Warren, Letter 3 February 1775, *Adams Family Correspondence* in the Collection of the Massachusetts Historical Society, <https://www.masshist.org/publications/apde2/view?id=ADMS-04-01-02-0122>

<sup>94</sup> James Warren to John Adams, Letter 20 February 1775, *The Papers of John Adams, Volume 2* in the Collection of the Massachusetts Historical Society, <https://www.masshist.org/publications/apde2/view?id=ADMS-06-02-02-0077> Accessed 6 November 2015.

<sup>95</sup> Burgoyne had already written a two-act comedy, *Maid of the Oaks* in 1774, staged by David Garrick at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane on 5 November 1774. He would write three other plays following his service in the American Revolution.

<sup>96</sup> *The Dramatic and Poetic Works of the Late Lieut. General J. Burgoyne, Vol. II* (London: Printed by C. Whittingham for Scrattcherd and Letterman, 1808), 234.

<sup>97</sup> O'Quinn, *Staging Governance*, 6.

<sup>98</sup> Just as O'Quinn suggests that theatre served as "a governmental mechanism whose target is manners" and that "the plays on the London stage [or staged throughout the transatlantic British empire] allow us to understand how a new form of citizen emerged" so Burgoyne suggests, that under tyrannous governments, intolerance of theatre could lead to more severe social and religious intolerance. O'Quinn, *Staging Governance*, 7.

<sup>99</sup> *Zara* had been performed in colonial America by Lewis Hallam's company in Philadelphia on 26 December 1768 and in New York in 1769. It was played again following the Revolution in Philadelphia on 16 April 1790, and on 23 February and 21 March 1796. Thomas Wall and his Maryland Company of Comedians performed the play in Baltimore in 1782 (Wall and his company performed in Maryland in



<sup>104</sup> Mercy Otis Warren Letter to John Adams, 10 March 1776, Massachusetts Historical Society, Papers of John Adams, Volume 4, <https://www.masshist.org/publications/apde2/view?id=ADMS-06-04-02-0044> Accessed 29 October 2015.

<sup>105</sup> John Adams Letter to Mercy Otis Warren, 16 April 1776, Massachusetts Historical Society, Papers of John Adams, Volume 4, <https://www.masshist.org/publications/apde2/view?&id=PJA04d030> Accessed 29 October 2015

<sup>106</sup> American Treasures of the Library of Congress <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/trm089.html> Accessed 2 November 2015.

<sup>107</sup> Mercy Otis Warren, *History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution*, ed. Lester Cohen, (Philadelphia: Library Fund, 1989, 696.

<sup>108</sup> According to Lester Cohen, Warren “viewed history in terms of three fundamental conflicts: a political conflict between liberty and arbitrary power; an ethical conflict between virtue and avarice; and a philosophical conflict between reason and passion. History revealed a continual struggle between liberty, virtue, and reason against the blind pursuit of power, luxury, and passion.” Introduction, Warren, *History*, xviii.

<sup>109</sup> Pollock, *The Philadelphia Theatre in the Eighteenth Century*, 133.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid*, 134.

<sup>111</sup> Harold C. Shiffler, “Religious Opposition to the Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia Stage,” *Educational Theatre Journal*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (Oct., 1962), 215-223.

<sup>112</sup> Pollock, *The Philadelphia Theatre in the Eighteenth Century*, 659-660.

<sup>113</sup> Maria Storer, who eventually married or set up house with John Henry, took over as premier actress of the company and began garnering attention for several of her performances.

<sup>114</sup> In New York the local clergy spoke out against the immoral nature of theatre in the vein of George Whitefield about whom David Garrick had commented, “I would give a hundred guineas, if I could say ‘Oh’ like Mr. Whitefield Suggesting the theatricality and public performance skills of the clergy.” Quoted in Harry S. Stout, *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans, 1991), 237.

<sup>115</sup> Pollock, *The Philadelphia Theatre in the Eighteenth Century*, 137.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid*, 142.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid*, 145.

<sup>118</sup> Royall Tyler also wrote one of the first American novels, *The Algerine Captive: or the Life and Adventures of Doctor Updike Underhill: Six Years a Prisoner among the Algerines* (1797), which, like Susanna Rowson’s play, *Slaves in Algiers* (1793) comments on a sense of American nationalism and what it means to be an American. Having lost Britain’s protection of the seaways, American vessels were often captured by Barbary Coast pirates, resulting in the capture of at least seven hundred American sailors who were held as slaves in North Africa. Both Rowson’s and Tyler’s works reference these contemporary acts, though Rowson attempts to define “freedom” and the American democratic ideal through the acts of women while Tyler attempts to rectify the situation through religious discourse or, as historian Jill Lepore write, “Faith answers to reason.” Tyler’s novel was published in London, only the second “American” novel to have achieved such acclaim. See Jill Lepore, “Prior Convictions,” *The New Yorker* (accessed 22 October 2012).

<sup>119</sup> Abigail Adams to Mercy Otis Warren Letter, 14 May 1787. Massachusetts Historical Society, John Adams Papers, <https://www.masshist.org/publications/apde2/view?mode=p&vol=AFC08&page=45#45> Accessed 4 November 2015.

<sup>120</sup> O’Quinn, *Staging Governance*, 11.

<sup>121</sup> O'Quinn argues "the transformations in the bodies of people of the middle ranks completed the middle-class revolution that spanned the long eighteenth century: aristocratic manners came to be coded as deviant mores, and lower class sociality was represented as a form pathological excess." O'Quinn, *Staging Governance*, 9.

<sup>122</sup> Mercy Otis Warren, *Poems Dramatic and Miscellaneous* (Boston: Printed by I. Thomas and E. T. Andrews at Faust's Statue, No. 45, Newberry Street, 1790), iii-iv.

<sup>123</sup> Warren, *The Sack of Rome*, In *Poems, Dramatic and Miscellaneous* (Boston: I. Thomas and E. T. Thomas At Faust's Statue, no. 45, Newbury Street, Boston, 1790), Preface.

<sup>124</sup> Caroline Winterer, *The Mirror of Antiquity: American Women and the Classical Tradition, 1750-1900* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), 51.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Baym, "Mercy Otis Warren's Gendered Melodrama and Revolution," 535.

<sup>129</sup> David Garrick, *The Private Correspondence of David Garrick: with the most celebrated persons of his time; now first pub. From the originals, and illustrated with notes, Volume 2* (London: H. Colburn and R. Bentley, 1892), 223.

<sup>130</sup> See Jane Williams, *Literary Women of England, Including a Biographical Epitome of All the Most Eminent to the Year 1700; and Sketches of the Poetesses to the Year 1850; with Extracts from Their Works, and Critical Remarks* (London: Saunders, Otley, and Co., 1861), 230.

<sup>131</sup> Published in Hannah Cowley, *Albina, Countess Raimond, a Tragedy*. (London: T. Spilsbury, 1779) ii.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid, ii.

<sup>133</sup> See Angela Escott, *The Celebrated Hannah Cowley: Experiments in Dramatic Genre* (London: Routledge, 2015), 25.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid, 36.

<sup>136</sup> Cowley, *Albina, a Tragedy*, Prologue.

<sup>137</sup> Cowley's husband Thomas did work in the Stamp Office as an official. They married either in 1768 or 1772; records are unclear. Thomas Cowley's connection to the Stamp Office might have placed her closer to political involvement, though the stamp crisis in America occurred several years before they married. It is possible strains of political involvement remained by 1776 when she was producing her first plays.

<sup>138</sup> Cowley, *Albina*, ix.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid, Prologue.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> For general scholarship on Mercy Otis Warren see Jeffrey H. Richards, *Mercy Otis Warren* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995); Nancy Rubin Stuart, *The Muse of the Revolution: The Secret Pen of Mercy Otis Warren and the Founding of a Nation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2008); Showalter, *Sister's Choice*; Laura Brown, *Ends of Empire: Women and Ideology in Early Eighteenth-Century English Literature*. (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993); Schofield and Macheski. *Curtain Calls: Katherine Anthony, First Lady of the Revolution: The Life of Mercy Otis Warren* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1958); Jean Fritz, *Cast for a Revolution: Some American Females and Enemies, 1728-1814* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1972). For general scholarship on Hannah Cowley see Misty G. Anderson, *Playwrights and Eighteenth-*

*Century Comedy: Negotiating Marriage on the London Stage* (New York: Palgrave, 2002); Betsy Bolton, *Women, Nationalism, and the Romantic Stage: Theatre and Politics in Britain, 1780-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Ellen Donkin, *Getting into the Act: Women Playwrights in London, 1776-1829* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Margarete Rubki, *Early Women Dramatists, 1550-1800* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998); Judith Stanton Phillips, "As This New-Found Path Attempting": Women Dramatists in England, 1660-1800," in Schoefeld and Macheski, eds., *Curtain Calls*.

<sup>142</sup> Ellen Donkin raises the issue of divisiveness amongst women playwrights, particularly women under the patronage of David Garrick. In her study on Hannah Cowley and Hannah More, Donkin argues that "Garrick's praiseworthy guidance and help to women playwrights during his career as manager had created in them a correspondingly strong need to distance themselves and their work from the power of his authority and authorship in order to continue working after his death." See Ellen Donkin, "The Paper War of Hannah Cowley and Hannah More," in *Curtain Calls*, 161.

<sup>143</sup> Five of her most popular plays, *Who's the Dupe?* (1779), *The Belle's Strategem* (1780), *Which Is the Man?* (1782), *A Bold Stroke for a Husband* (1783), and *More Ways than One* (1784) were staged throughout the transatlantic world, including in Philadelphia, the new capitol of the United States. These plays became some of the most popular plays attended by Anglophone audiences during the late eighteenth century. *Who's the Dupe?*, for example, was performed nine times in Philadelphia between 22 January 1790 and 12 December 1796, including the official opening of Thomas Wignell's Chestnut Street Theatre on 17 February 1794. *The Belle's Strategem* was performed six times in Philadelphia alone between 24 May 1790 and 16 April 1798. Cowley's play, *Which Is the Man?* received one performance in that city on 16 May 1792, and *A Bold Stroke for a Husband* received three performances between 13 October 1795 and 9 March 1796. *More Ways than One* garnered six performances in Philadelphia between 20 December 1790 and 9 August 1793. Pollock, *The Philadelphia Theatre in the Eighteenth Century*, 406, 415, 421.

<sup>144</sup> Except for a cloaked reference to war in Garrick's own epilogue to Cowley's play in which he writes "Free Men in Love, or War, should ne'er be press'd" Cowley herself makes no mention of war or political tensions between Britain and America. See *Epilogue* in Hannah Cowley, *The Runaway* (London: Printed for I. Dodsley in Pall Mall; T. Beckett and T. Cadell in the Strand; T. Longman in Paternoster; Row & Carnan & Newberry in St. Pauls Church Yard, 1776).

<sup>145</sup> Escott, *The Celebrated Hannah Cowley*, 61.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>148</sup> While *The Runaway* presented London audiences in 1776 with a light domestic comedy that also questioned social customs, Benjamin Edes printed another broadside in Watertown, Massachusetts, the so-called "test-oath" related to an act passed by the Massachusetts General Court on 1 May 1776. The "test-oath" responded to the stirrings of war with a far more direct challenge, "We the subscribers, do each of us severally for ourselves, profess, testify and declare before God and the world, that we verily believe that the war, resistance and opposition in which the United American Colonies are now engaged, against the fleets and armies of Great-Britain, is on the part of said colonies, just and necessary." Broadside, Printed by Benjamin Edes in Watertown, Massachusetts, 1776. *Early American Imprints, Series 1*, no. 14840. Accessed 10 October 2013.

<sup>149</sup> Hannah Cowley, *The Runaway; A Comedy, As It Is Acted at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane* (Dublin: Printed for S. Price, 1776), Dedication to David Garrick.

<sup>150</sup> In 1779, Cowley watched a performance of Hannah More's *Percy* and *Fatal Falsehood* at the Covent Garden Theatre and was so convinced that More had plagiarized from her play, *Albina*, that she wrote in her Preface to *Albina*, "How all these wonderful resemblances happened, it is impossible for me to know—nor do I know that Miss More ever saw my Tragedy—it was in Mr. Garrick's possession (under the name of Edwina) soon after the conclusion of the season in which he left the Stage; about which time, I have since been informed, Miss More was a Visitant at Hampton, and that the Play, afterwards called *Percy*, was

then translating. It was afterwards in Mr. Harris's Closet, at the same time with *Percy*, and again nearly at the same time with *Fatal Falsehood*. I know that Managers are continually employed in giving advice, and in suggesting alterations to Authors; and I have frequently heard, before I had any experience in this anxious warfare, of the danger, when once an idea is afloat, in the Theatrical Hemisphere, of its getting into other plays." See Hannah Cowley, *Albina, a Tragedy* (London: T. Spilsbury, 1779), vii.

<sup>151</sup> Garrick, recognized as an important mentor for women hoping to make successful careers in London theatre as actresses and playwrights, patronized some of the period's most important women playwrights and actresses. While some critics denigrated him as a womanizer, a manager who controlled women and placed them under his patronage, it must be understood that without Garrick, many of Britain's most important theatre women may not have succeeded onstage. He jump-started the careers of several of Britain's most successful theatrical women including playwrights Hannah Cowley and Hannah More (1745-1833), the latter for whom he wrote both prologue and epilogue for her popular tragedy, *Percy* (1777). He acted opposite some of London's most famous actresses, including Margaret "Peg" Woffington (1720-1760), a woman with whom Garrick lived openly in an unmarried state for several years until 1744, when she left him suddenly. He even brought Sarah Siddons, perhaps Britain's most famous eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century actress, to the Drury Lane stage in 1774, though by 1777 she had left for a circuit tour after disappointing London audiences. Garrick, who died in 1779, never did see Siddons become the genius onstage that he imagined she might become.

<sup>152</sup> Donkin, "Hannah Cowley and Hannah More," in *Curtain Calls*, 144.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 146.

<sup>154</sup> Cowley, *The Runaway*, Dedication to David Garrick.

<sup>155</sup> Donkin, "Hannah Cowley and Hannah More," in *Curtain Calls*, 144.

<sup>156</sup> Cowley, *The Runaway*, Dedication to David Garrick.

<sup>157</sup> Donkin, "Hannah Cowley and Hannah More," in *Curtain Calls*, xx.

<sup>158</sup> See Cowley's *Letter to David Garrick* in Hannah Cowley, *The Runaway* (London: Printed for I. Dodsley in Pall Mall; T. Beckett and T. Cadell in the Strand; T. Longman in Paternoster; Row & Carnan & Newberry in St. Pauls Church Yard, 1776).

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, Prologue.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>162</sup> Chapter two this trope of female authors pandering to male audiences with Aphra Behn and Susannah Centlivre, while chapter six will explore this practice again with the plays of Susanna Rowson and Elizabeth Inchbald. It also excuses the quality of Cowley's work as faulted because it was written by a woman. Yet the large number of performances of *The Runaway* alone elevated it as one of the year's most attended plays. *The Runaway* ended its premier season in 1776 with seventeen performances during a period when a run of four performances was considered admirable.

<sup>163</sup> Some of the Drury Lane players in the original production of *The Runaway* would also on to become London's most well-loved thespians including actress Sarah Siddons and Elizabeth Younge (1740/1745?-d. 1779). Sarah Siddons (1755-1831) made one of her earliest appearances onstage in London in the title role of Emily in *The Runaway*, though her performance (amongst others) was not lauded enough to keep her from leaving for a rural tour to improve her acting skills.

<sup>164</sup> After Younge's death, Pope himself took to the stage, appearing in Thomas Southerne's *Oroonoko* (1695) in 1785 at the Theatre Royal Covent Garden. Pope would go on to marry twice more, the second time to another actress, Maria Ann Campion (1785-1803, also buried in Westminster Abbey) and the third time to fellow artist, Clara Maria Leigh (1768-1838).

<sup>165</sup> Cowley, *The Runaway*, 3.

<sup>166</sup> While *The Runaway* presented London audiences in 1776 with a light domestic comedy that also questioned social customs, Benjamin Edes printed another broadside printed in Watertown, Massachusetts, the so-called “test-oath” related to an act passed by the Massachusetts General Court on 1 May 1776. The “test-oath” responded to the stirrings of war with a far more direct challenge, “We the subscribers, do each of us severally for ourselves, profess, testify and declare before God and the world, that we verily believe that the war, resistance and opposition in which the United American Colonies are now engaged, against the fleets and armies of Great-Britain, is on the part of said colonies, just and necessary.” Broadside, Printed by Benjamin Edes in Watertown, Massachusetts, 1776. *Early American Imprints, Series 1*, no. 14840. Accessed 10 October 2013.

<sup>167</sup> Cowley, *The Runaway*, 2, 31.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid, 83.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> As quoted in Leigh Hunt, *The Companion*, (London: Printed for Hunt and Clark, 1828), 386.

<sup>171</sup> Gothic drama emerged as early as 1768 with Horace Walpole’s *The Mysterious Mother* and lasted popularly through the 1830s. Interest in studying Gothic drama began with Bertrand Evans’s study, *Gothic Drama from Walpole to Shelley* (1947), in which Evans connected Gothic spirit on stage and Gothic spirit in the novel. Evans viewed Gothic drama as a “theatre of extremes” whose main goal was to stun and shock the audience with spectacular audiovisual special effects. Gothic drama’s conventions were established in Gothic literature. Gothic drama often included ghosts and darkness, castles and grandiose scenes, and dark-robed, shadowy figures. Gothic drama is a particular type of popular drama that runs parallel to the time period I am examining, and much has been written on women involved with this type of theatre. Interest in this type of theatre was not simply thematic. The expansion of Drury Lane Theatre and Covent Garden Theatre in London allowed the greater spectacle of Gothic theatre to be appreciated by audiences. Likewise, this period saw an increase in more extravagant staging techniques and lighting as well as the inclusion of more special effects, reinforcing the idea of ghostly apparitions associated with Gothic drama. Imagine scenes set with ruined castles, churches and cemeteries, dense forests, lush overgrowth, steep mountainsides—everything stark, barren, and ominous. Joanna Baillie (1762-1851), who wrote the Gothic play, *De Monfort* (1798), struggled to maintain her legitimacy as a playwright and competed with Gothic dramas such as Matthew Gregory Lewis’s *The Castle Spectre* (1797) and George Colman the Younger’s *Blue-Beard* (1798). In 1800, *De Monfort* was produced at Drury Lane Theatre with John Kemble and Sarah Siddons, two of the period’s most popular and accomplished actors, taking the lead parts.<sup>171</sup> Theatre managers were profit-driven and playwrights such as Baillie struggled to write plays that pleased the growing working- and middle-class audiences that preferred escapist fantasy over a colorless industrial life. Ultimately, Gothic Drama became very popular in England, though it was perhaps less so popular in the American colonies. While the idea of presenting the horrific onstage is embraced and popular on London stages, these plays (mostly written by men, Joanna Baillie is one of the exceptions as a playwright, Ann Radcliff as a Gothic novelist) are less translated and translatable to America, which has, by 1790, turned its focus more on political and cultural notions of freedom, identity, and personal rights.

<sup>172</sup> Joanna Baillie’s *De Monfort*, is one of the indispensable gothic dramas in *Seven Gothic Dramas: 1789-1825*, by Jeffrey Cox. Cox says of Baillie’s *De Monfort* that the description of the main character, Jane, as queenly and captivating to men but in humble dress, was a perfect description of Sarah Siddons, making the audience thus even more aware of the importance of the actress and thus of this character. Cox writes, “Such self-consciousness breaks the dramatic illusion and the power of dramatic stereotypes by making the audience think about Siddons and her conventional roles.” Additionally, Cox adds, “The men in the play want Jane De Monfort to be a typical Siddons character: emotionally responsive, powerfully attractive, passive. They want her to be the spectacle at the center of their narrative, the object over which they fight—both in the social realm of flirtation and in actual combat. She, however, simply refuses to play that role. It is not she but the men who are dominated by their emotions. She is the calm one, the one who exercises

self-control.” Clearly Joanna Baillie as playwright understood both the power of Sarah Siddons as an actress and how audiences demanded both power in performance and powerful images onstage. In staging *De Monfort* with Mrs. Siddons, Baillie manages to make a three-way connection and uses both actress and audience to her advantage. While it may appear that women’s roles as beautiful but ineffective women become more circumscribed as the nineteenth century progresses and as new gender conventions take shape, I would argue that actresses still had the ability to shape performances with a powerful presence. Mrs. Siddons commanded the attention of audiences regardless of her role. See Jeffrey N. Cox, *Seven Gothic Dramas, 1789-1825* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1992), 56.

<sup>173</sup> See Donkin, “Hannah Cowley and Hannah More,” in *Curtain Calls*.

<sup>174</sup> See Marianne D’Enza, “Sheridan and Women,” in *Richard Brinsley Sheridan: The Impresario in Political and Cultural Context*, eds., Jack E. DeRochi and Daniel James Ennis, (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013), 235-258.

<sup>175</sup> See William Winter, Preface to “Two Old Comedies: The Belle’s Stratagem and The Wonder. Reduced and Re-arranged by Augustin Daly.” (Privately printed from the prompt books of Daly’s Theatre, 1893). 11-14.

[https://books.google.com/books?id=e2CKdMWU9wC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs\\_ge\\_summary\\_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=e2CKdMWU9wC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false) Accessed 4 November 2015.

<sup>176</sup> Winter, Preface to “Two Old Comedies, 13.

<sup>177</sup> Melinda C. Finberg, ed., *Eighteenth-Century Women Dramatists* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2008), 212.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid*, xlv.

<sup>179</sup> Hannah Cowley, *The Belle’s Stratagem* (I.i., 30-31), in Finberg, ed., *Eighteenth-Century Women Dramatists*, 214.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid*, 215.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid*, 220.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid*, 227.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid*, 278.

<sup>185</sup> Hannah Cowley, *The Town Before You*, in *The Works of Mrs. Cowley, Dramas and Poems, in Three Volumes, Vol. II, Dramas*, (London: Published by Wilkie and Robinson, 1813), 324.

<sup>186</sup> Cowley, *The Town Before You*.

<sup>187</sup> *The Oracle and Public Advertiser*, Monday 22 December 1794, 3.

<sup>188</sup> Cowley, *The Town Before You*, Prologue, xi.

<sup>189</sup> Hannah Cowley, *Bold Stroke for a Husband* (London: Printed by M. Scott, Chancery Lane for T. Evans, Paternoster Row, 1784 ), V.i., 72.

<sup>190</sup> Cowley, *The Town Before You*, (I., i), 2.

<sup>191</sup> Cowley, *The Town Before You*, (I., v), 15.

<sup>192</sup> Cowley, *The Town Before You*, (II, i), 20.

<sup>193</sup> Cowley, *The Town Before You*, (II, i), 23.

<sup>194</sup> Cowley, *The Town Before You*, (II, i), 23.

<sup>195</sup> Cowley, *The Town Before You*, (V,v), 102-103.

<sup>196</sup> Pollock, *The Philadelphia Theatre*, 406, 415, 421.

<sup>197</sup> Joseph Donahue, *The Cambridge History of British Theatre, Volume 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 82.

<sup>198</sup> Following the Revolution, British and Irish actresses sailed for America in droves during the 1790s dreaming of fame and fortune now that American theatres were open for business. Two members of the famous Kemble acting family—Elizabeth Whitlock and Ann Hatton— and sisters of London’s most celebrated eighteenth-century actress, Sarah Siddons, made their way to America in the 1790s along with lesser-known performers like child actress Eliza Arnold Poe (1787-1811, mother of American author Edgar Allan Poe) and her mother, also named Elizabeth Arnold. In some cases, familial connections such as those cultivated by the Hallam and Kemble families, helped legitimize actresses and propelled them to celebrity status even before audiences had a chance to assess their talent. While an audience in New York might not get to see the great London actress Sarah Siddons perform, they could, between 1793-1807 and again between 1812-1814, witness Siddons’ younger sister, Elizabeth Whitlock appear in a variety of tragic roles with convincing and memorable effect.

<sup>199</sup> Thomas Wignell was Lewis Hallam, Jr.s’ cousin and a former American Company actor.

## CHAPTER 6

### THE POLITICAL DISCOURSE OF TRAGEDY AND GENDER IN ELIZABETH INCHBALD'S *THE MASSACRE*, SUSANNA ROWSON'S *SLAVES IN ALGIERS*, AND SARAH POGSON SMITH'S *THE FEMALE ENTHUSIAST* (1792-1807)

#### Introduction

During the last three decades of the eighteenth century enormous social, cultural and political upheavals racked the transatlantic world and affected Britain, British North America, the Caribbean, and France. In addition, three significant revolutions: the American Revolution (1765-1783), the French Revolution (1789-1799) and the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804) significantly influenced Anglo culture transatlantically including fashion, music, and theatre. Actresses and women playwrights living through this contentious period from 1765-1807 performed, published, and printed their plays privately while they participated in political discourse. They shared their experiences of the horrors of war, lauded republican or nationalistic principles, and presented audiences with unconventional, equally contentious heroines. They certainly challenged late-eighteenth-century audiences' views on acceptable feminine behavior—for actresses, for characters they portrayed, and for women playwrights. In order to understand the importance of women in shaping eighteenth-century Anglophone theatre then it's important to reestablish once again the important role women playwrights and actresses played as cultural diplomats, as they performed and wrote about key contemporary cultural, social and political events. In order to grasp just how revolutionary this period was and how women responded to such volatile changes in their world order, this chapter once again takes a microhistorical approach and focuses on how three late-eighteenth-century women playwrights, Elizabeth Inchbald, Sarah Pogson Smith and Susanna Rowson, challenged social norms, and wrote serious plays that disrupted social conventions about what and how women should write. In doing so they presented strong,

memorable female characters whose actions and words resonated with great cultural, social, and political impact. They also gave voice to real women, such as themselves, and publicly demonstrated how women could and ought to be engaged and engaging public figures.

While the American Revolution did not appear to make a significant cultural impact in Britain, the French Revolution did. Britons were long-accustomed to live and travel in France and the two countries shared cultural interests in theatre, art, music, fashion, even though they were not directly connected through language or political ideology. Just as American playwrights questioned their socio-political relationship with Britain during and after the American Revolution, British playwrights posed socio-political questions in the face of the French Revolution, a war far more threatening to the British in its proximity. War yields a variety of nationalistic and patriotic responses to governmental oppression and governmental pride as suggested in the writings of Mercy Otis Warren and Hannah Cowley discussed in the previous chapter. However, idealistic patriotic fervor and national idealism aside, war is above all violent, merciless, and bloody. Violence, therefore, became a major theme and focus for many women playwrights writing during the last decade of the eighteenth century and the first decade of the nineteenth century and was certainly the focus in three specific plays written by Elizabeth Inchbald, Sarah Pogson Smith, and to a lesser degree Susanna Rowson.

Because these three revolutions took place in such a short span of time and had such cataclysmic, societal-changing consequences, it is not surprising that they significantly influenced and informed the consciousnesses of three women playwrights. While comedies were certainly the more popular plays in Anglophone theatre during the last quarter of the eighteenth century, nonetheless, British-born London playwright/actress Elizabeth Inchbald, British-born and American raised playwright/actress Susanna Rowson, and British or Caribbean born and American raised Sarah Pogson Smith took risks in producing plays that confronted the horrors of war and enslavement in a direct, markedly “unwomanish”<sup>1</sup> manner.<sup>2</sup> In a span of fifteen years,

these women wrote three plays that interpreted violence enacted upon women, violence women enacted, and potential violence under which women lived in fear. Not only did they suggest the importance of women being involved in public discourse, they provided audiences throughout the transatlantic region with plays and performances heavily influenced by and critical of contemporary social and political events. Their credibility as playwrights and performers (at least for Inchbald and Rowson), and their acknowledged status as public and professional figures, gave credence to the words they wrote, the words they spoke onstage, the characters they played, and the plays they published under their own names, allowing their unequivocal female voices to resonate, and instilling them with potent access to transnational, transatlantic, transcultural, and intranational cultural diplomacy.

In 1792, a year after the publication of her first popular novel, *A Simple Story*, and eight years after the publication of her first play, *Mogul Tale; or, The Descent of the Balloon*, Elizabeth Inchbald wrote her three-act political play, *The Massacre* about recent activities leading up to the French Revolution. *The Massacre* placed French women at the center of the onstage violence even though the number of words spoken by women onstage is limited. Violence against women is ultimately emphasized by their exclusion from political discourse. Examining Inchbald's tragedy, *The Massacre*, not only addresses obvious contemporary concerns over the silencing of women, and the deadly outcomes of the French Revolution and its proximity to Britain, it also presents insight into the types of drama open to Anglophone women playwrights at the end of the eighteenth century and how plays engaged in both historical and political commentary.

In 1794, having recently returned to America after a twenty-year absence and having already published six popular novels, including *Charlotte; a Tale of Truth* in 1790 (retitled *Charlotte Temple* in 1797), Susanna Rowson wrote *Slaves in Algiers; or, A Struggle for Freedom*. *Slaves in Algiers* was both published and produced in Philadelphia, and was dedicated "The Citizens of the United States of North-America. The First Dramatic Effort Is Inscribed, By Their

Obliging Friend, And Humble Servant, S. Rowson.”<sup>3</sup> The first publicly announced play written by a woman living in America, *Slaves in Algiers* focuses on the interactions and beliefs of several enslaved female characters including American and Muslim women. While Rowson’s play is not as violent as the tragedies of *Inchabl* and *Pogson Smith*, her work discusses important American themes of enslavement, liberty, personal character, and the value of women’s ideas and convictions. Part drama, part comedy, Rowson’s gendered and racially provocative work was the only one of these three plays to be produced, perhaps because it sprinkled in popular eighteenth-century dramatic methods including comic relief, cross-dressing characters, a love story, long-lost children reunited with their parents, the stereotyped money-grubbing old Jew, and a Republican-loving, strongly convicted woman. First performed in Philadelphia, it was also staged in New York, Boston, and Charleston, and was published throughout the transatlantic including in Dublin and Jamaica.

In 1807, Sarah Pogson Smith wrote her five-act tragedy, *The Female Enthusiast*, which placed a woman at the epicenter of the French Revolution’s political turmoil. Based loosely on the murder of Jean Paul Marat by Marie-Anne Charlotte de Corday d’Armont (usually known just as Charlotte Corday) in 1793 and her subsequent trial and execution, Pogson Smith’s play, like *Inchabl*’s is unusually violent. She is also sympathetic to her murderer who justifies her actions by claiming that she saved lives by killing, an excuse commonly used in war. While she also includes a love interest—Charlotte’s brother gets married—ironically it is a woman who takes up arms and Charlotte acts out violently instead of her brother. All three of these plays place women within the violence and each play was based on a significant contemporary event with which audiences (whether that meant privately shared with friends, publicly performed, published during the events themselves or much later) were very much aware.

This chapter begins by looking briefly at war, tragedy, and contemporary thought and how the American, French, and Haitian Revolutions influenced what women playwrights wrote

and how they incorporated female characters into the violent or repressive action. It next examines each of the particular plays, starting with Inchbald's tragedy. I discuss the play's subject matter, the characters involved, the inevitable conclusion based on Inchbald's self-proclaimed truth, and reasons why Inchbald chose not to publish or produce her work. The victimized and brutally murdered females are defenseless to the violence, in part, because they are not given voice.<sup>4</sup> Representations of female vulnerability and exclusion (the bloody knife, the pleading wife, the body brought in on a bier at the end of the play when the men are all saved), suggest the potentially harmful nature of both female exclusion from political conversations and paternalistic protectionism. It is their corpses (lifeless bodies) of women rather than their words (intellect) that shake the audience. Inchbald's decision not to publish or produce *The Massacre* presents a level of self-censoring that makes her only tragedy important and singular, and suggests she knew her play contained a level of social awareness and political commentary that could damage her reputation as a playwright (she had published or produced at least eleven plays by 1792). Inchbald's *The Massacre* examined patriotism, morality, and national unity, themes popular in Romantic Drama, and suggested that women were victims because of their inability to engage in political dialogue. Inchbald's assertion was antithetical to the reality of female involvement in the September Massacres in Paris that suggested women actively engaged in violence, which Pogson Smith later addressed in *The Female Enthusiast*.

Pogson Smith's play is based on events of the French Revolution, and works well as a compliment to Inchbald's play. Written almost fifteen years after the events, Pogson Smith's tragedy is not caught up in the moment of contemporary emotions, yet it is still close enough within the memories of audiences who would have heard about or experienced the French Revolution themselves. Thus it still resonated with meaning, particularly as America edged closer and closer to military confrontations with Britain. Pogson Smith's play centers around violence committed by a woman and Inchbald's play looks at violence to women—both involve a knife

suggesting intimate acts of violence. Charlotte Corday is the murderer rather than murdered victim, however, her actions led to her execution, another form of murder that reflects society's inability to sanction violent acts committed by a female, however noble her cause. Pogson Smith was extremely sympathetic to her murderess, Corday. She challenged social understandings of who/what society considered to be murderer/ monster, and how one justification for killing in the name of liberty and virtue can be so different from another. Like Inchbald, whose play about the French Revolution also served to offer political commentary on British politics, Pogson Smith, who lived in Charleston, South Carolina, where a number of Haitian refugees had escaped during the Haitian Revolution, offers a play that also reflected the anxieties emanating from the Haitian Revolution, and the underlying fear of a slave revolt many Charleston residents felt was imminent. While it is possible that Pogson Smith's play was staged in Charleston, it is not recorded as having been produced, perhaps, like Inchbald's play, because it was simply too violent.

Finally, I examine Susanna Rowson's drama *Slaves in Algiers; or, A Struggle for Freedom* (1794), which was the only one of these three plays performed before an audience.<sup>5</sup> American newspapers were full of Algerian captivity stories during the 1790s, a phenomenon that occurred frequently once the British navy no longer protected American ships traveling in the Atlantic. Based on the enslavement of American citizens by Algerian pirates, Rowson presented a world outside of traditional Anglo values in which women acted as the defenders of republicanism, and proselytizers for freedom and liberty. It is important to note that Rowson placed her setting in the world of the "other" in order to have her female characters assert such radical ideas. And while women seem to be placed in traditional roles as wife, daughter, sister, mother, Rowson actually challenged social normativity and gender norms in order to present a multi-gendered republican view of liberty, equality, and femininity. Rowson's women show how republicanism and a newly imagined femininity can go hand in hand.

Instead of merely using their plays to challenge social perceptions of how women should respond to and act within the volatile Revolutionary Era, each of these playwrights actually challenged fundamental British and American views on women and placed women at the center of controversial events. For *Inchbald*, having no voice made women more vulnerable to violence. For Pogson Smith women demonstrated strength, character, and integrity through violent acts. For Rowson, even enslaved women could be defenders of republican ideals, embrace notions of liberty and convert those outside of America to their cause. Each of the female characters in their plays challenge the inappropriateness of women's inclusion or exclusion in society including gender stereotypes, multiple meanings of femininity, grace, shame, even views on French women and questions about who we perceive to be "monsters." Yet when they wanted to translate that experienced violence into literature, only Susanna Rowson, whose play combined humor with drama, had the courage to present her work to the public.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, I suggest that these two tragedies and one drama emerged out of the violence and frenetic change taking place socially, culturally and politically in the eighteenth-century transatlantic region. Most eighteenth-century women playwrights wrote (and succeeded at writing) domestic comedies.<sup>7</sup> Tragedies, traditionally considered to be the highest form of drama, were considered unfeminine because they implicitly or overtly portrayed violence onstage, a view that was more true in Britain than in America. Yet these plays move away from drama that was comfortable for women to write and instead reflect an unexpected feminine understanding of both the republican ideology that flourished in the transatlantic region with its emphasis on virtue, and the fear and violence that both overtly and covertly define these Revolutions, particularly when women are excluded from the conversation. Thus not only do these three women and their plays serve to provide significant insight into contemporary events, their work in theatre as cultural diplomats provided teaching moments in suggesting how society should behave, how women should be treated, and who should be included in these conversations.

**Revolution, Tragedy, and Contemporary Thought: Women Playwrights Amidst Social and Political Drama**

By 1807, after experiencing three transatlantic revolutions, Anglophone women writers and performers had lived with violence or the threat of violence for decades and violence became integral to turn-of-the-century dramatic national narratives. Seasoned women playwrights like Mercy Otis Warren, Hannah Cowley, and Elizabeth Inchbald lived through tragedies and violence and as a result, they became increasingly sensitive to examining what it meant to be a woman within a violent context. Theatre as culture represents the myriad ways in which humans live through and respond to various a variety of life experiences, including acts of violence. Ashley M. DeCarli argues that theatre as cultural exchange provides an outlet for societies experiencing violence, and claims; “the psychological impact of war and terrorism and economic upheaval channels sentiments of reason away from religion and culture into such phenomena as escapism or political resignation.”<sup>8</sup> Further, DeCarli suggests that “the impact of war channels the desires for symbols, narrative, metaphor and an interpretation of politics and society into extremism that camouflages itself in the realm of culture with damaging effect for state and society on the western, liberal and tolerant model...[thus] people learn about cultures through a distorted lens of fear that leads them to an unconscious habit of profiling individuals into cultural stereotypes or images of the enemy reflecting cultural ideas.”<sup>9</sup>

Theatre in times of war or in the presence of violent conflict or social repression can help to repair a fractured social structure by providing social cohesion through lived experiences. Theatre can also reinforce society’s shared beliefs and values while at the same time it can act to suppress (or mock) ideas, values, and beliefs society finds threatening. Considering the three plays written by Elizabeth Inchbald, Sarah Pogson Smith and Susanna Rowson through this lens allows us to imagine theatre as a form of cultural diplomacy that walks a fine line between the

promotion of social, cultural and political ideas and the suppression of thoughts, beliefs and values of those individuals outside of the shared cultural (theatrical) experience. Thus theatre creates bond just as it creates or identifies divisions, a sort of us vs. them experience. Because sharing culture, values, traditions, and beliefs actually strengthens societies, theatre in America and Britain allowed Britons and Americans to imagine a more unified country and a stronger national identity. Even as theatre strengthened the individual national identities of America and Britain, theatre also provided the transatlantic Anglophone world a way to remain connected culturally, even as these countries divided politically because theatre provided a public (often neutral) space in which communities might share their anxieties or grievances and allowed individuals to abstract often troubling or threatening social, cultural or political events. Much of women's theatre reflected violence—violence women experienced, violence that threatened women, violence women performed. And in each of the plays presented here, violence or the threat of violence is central to understanding the role of women in this volatile world.

By the 1790s, Anglophone women used the stage as a social and political platform and the majority of women playwrights now published their work under their own names.

Anglophone plays written by women between 1790 and 1807 allowed them to engage in cultural diplomacy and become recognized social and political public contributors. In addition, plays written in America were not subject to the same censorship regulations in place in Britain, allowing for greater freedom of expression, including these uncomfortable conversations about violence in the face of Revolution and what happens when women are removed from these socially and politically necessary conversations. Inchbald, Rowson, and Pogson Smith wrote three very different political plays that each directly addressed themes of revolution and social change that placed women directly at the center of these conflicts. Yet only one of these plays, Rowson's *Slaves in Algiers*, reached a wide audience.

## Elizabeth Inchbald's *The Massacre* and the Staging of

### Revolutionary Ideas

Elizabeth Simpson Inchbald (Fig. 6.1) grew up in a Catholic family that had little interaction with theatre.

Inchbald's brother, George Simpson, had acted a few times on the Norwich stage, and it is possibly through his theatre connections that Inchbald got the acting itch and decided to run away to London in 1772 with the hope of becoming an actress. The previous year while visiting a

sister in London she had made the acquaintance of Joseph Inchbald; she met up with him again upon her return and the two soon married. As an independent female on her own in London, it is likely that Elizabeth Inchbald happily accepted his protection. Joseph Inchbald introduced Elizabeth, who was strikingly beautiful but who possessed a pronounced stutter, to the stage and



Figure 6.1. Elizabeth Inchbald, attributed to John Hoppner, 1789-1795 (Private Collection).

her first performance was in the role of the kind-hearted Cordelia in Shakespeare's *King Lear*, performed at the Theatre Royal Bristol. The couple continued to tour in Britain and spent an extended period performing in Scotland. Inchbald met Sarah Siddons and her brother John Phillip Kemble in Liverpool while on tour and the three of them became life-long friends.

When she was twenty-five, Inchbald's husband died suddenly in Leeds. The following year, 1780 after seven years appearing onstage, Inchbald became a regular performer with London's Covent Garden Theatre. Her first



Figure 6.2. Elizabeth Inchbald, by Wooding, published by John Sewell, after John Russell; National Portrait Gallery, London, NPG D16734.

role was the breeches role as Bellario in Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher's tragic-comedy *Philister* (c. 1610). Perhaps to supplement her income or in an effort to remove herself from performing, in 1784, she added playwriting to her repertoire, producing *The Mogul Tale; or, The Descent of the Balloon* at Dublin's Theatre Royal Smock-Alley.

Inchbald wrote at least twenty additional plays during her lifetime in addition to two novels and a collection of important critical works on drama. All but three of her plays were published during her lifetime and most of them saw regular performances in London and abroad. By 1789, sixteen years after she began acting, Inchbald gave up performing in order to write fulltime. It does not appear that Inchbald had any children nor did she remarry. She continued to reside in and around London, and died there in 1821.

Inchbald's success as an eighteenth-century woman playwright was not singular (Fig. 6.2).<sup>10</sup> Given the popularity of theatre during this period, Marc Baer suggests that the everyday theatricality inherent in daily London society came directly from the stage and argues, "Given intense interest in the stage among all social groups in urban society...it should come as no surprise that life imitated art."<sup>11</sup> According to David D. Mann and Susan Garland, over ninety women (including Joanne Baillie, Hannah Brand, Ann Yearsley, Mary Shelley, Mary Robinson, Sophia and Harriet Lee, Hannah More, Hannah Cowley, Fanny Burney, and Elizabeth Inchbald) wrote plays during the Romantic Period (often dated 1789-1823. These women wrote five-act comedies, tragedies,



Figure 6.3. Elizabeth Inchbald, playwright's world. Unknown artist, after Henry Wigstead (d. 1793), *I'll Tell You What!* Stipple engraving. [London]: Published by E. Jackson, 1790s? NYPL, Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs, Print Collection.

operas, interludes, and what came to be called closet dramas, plays intended to be read, discussed or performed privately. Reading in itself was seen as a theatrical activity, not antithetical to views on public and private works. Even Inchbald recognized the value of plays being read privately rather than being performed publicly as she commented, that a member of the audience “might possibly be deprived of his enjoyment, by the vain endeavour of the performers, to display, by imitation, that, which only real life can show, or imagination pourtray.”<sup>12</sup> Certainly this belief in the power of the read play also held sway in America as suggested by the polemical pieces of Mercy Otis Warren. Inchbald acknowledged the importance of personal interactions with plays stating, “There are things so diminutive, they cannot be perceived in a theatre; whilst in a closet, their very smallness constitutes their value.”<sup>13</sup> In a world where theatre spaces were only increasing, Inchbald’s comments about the value of being able to appreciate the diminutive nature of closet dramas is significant.

Catherine Burroughs argues that “the power of London theaters to assist in blurring boundaries between public and private spheres...elicited a cultural distress about the position of women that permeates the discourse of the early nineteenth century.”<sup>14</sup> Burroughs asserts that even Elizabeth Inchbald “indicated how tenaciously gender ideology held sway over her professional life—she who had managed to confound cultural expectations for feminine performance by becoming a financially successful theater artist.”<sup>15</sup> Inchbald’s position as both actress and playwright complicated her position as “public” woman for, as Tracy Davis suggests, actresses like Inchbald [and I would argue also women playwrights] performed both onstage and off for the public. Because of this, she suggests, they could never really be part of the public realm since their private lives become fodder for gossip and to live in the public was to risk personal exposure.<sup>16</sup> As the above figure suggests (Fig. 6.3), society imagined (comically) women playwrights as intellectually inebriated as suggested by the bottle of gin on the desk), slightly messy, “cat people.” But Inchbald was not one to shy away from public acclaim. She

embraced her celebrity status as an actress and playwright and had her portrait made dozens of times, being particularly fond of the pensive “writer” attitude (see both Fig. 6.2 and Fig. 6.3). However, given the Romantic Period’s inclination for closet dramas, it is not surprising that Inchbald, who even translated foreign plays for English audiences, wrote and printed *The Massacre* for private consumption since she considered the act of reading plays to have its own level of theatrical authenticity and importance.

Because Inchbald wrote her play during the French Revolution, it inevitably reflects the

immediacy of her horror and of Britain’s fear that “Revolution” as it had worked itself out in America and was currently working through in France, might indeed invade Britain (or pervade



Figure 6.4 *The Massacre at Paris, August 10, 1792 – I. Plundering the King’s Cellar at Paris*, by Johann Zoffany, c. 1794.

British life since Revolutionary thought was ineffective). Inchbald’s placement of her play within the French Revolution also allowed her to pass judgment on contemporary British events—not as a direct reflection of the reality of those moments but in order to call into question the creation of a middle class in Britain as well as other changes threatening to challenge Britain’s rigid social order.<sup>17</sup>

Inchbald’s work preceded the Reign of Terror (6 September 1793 – 28 July 1794) but followed the September Massacres (2-7 September 1792).<sup>18</sup> As a reaction to the September

Massacre violence, Inchbald’s play raises the question of whether violence is ever justified in the face of persecution and whether it is morally acceptable in a desire for revenge. Inchbald felt deeply the importance of being able to adhere to your own beliefs without fear of persecution—making *The Massacre*, based on Louis-Sébastien Mercier’s three-act drama, *Jean Hennuyer, the Bishop of Lizieux; or, The Massacre of St. Bartholomew* (1773) and about the French Revolution, doubly compelling.

It was not until James Boaden included Inchbald’s play in his *Memoirs of Mrs. Inchbald* (1833) that the public had ready access to *The Massacre*.<sup>19</sup> While it did not gain a wide public reading, Inchbald circulated her play amongst her circle of friends. According to her letters to William Godwin, Inchbald intended her work to be discussed in light of contemporary events taking place in France at the beginning of the Revolution and as a critique of Jacobin and anti-Jacobin positions in England. Inchbald even introduced her decision not to publish *The Massacre* to a wide audience in a simple and straightforward manner, taking the comments of Horace Walpole for her own and claiming that her play was never intended for representation because “the subject is so horrid, that...it would shock, rather than give satisfaction.”<sup>20</sup> Further, Inchbald presented her play as one

based on truth, “founded upon circumstances which have been related as *facts*, and which the unhappy state of a neighbouring nation does but too powerfully give reason to credit.”<sup>21</sup> Yet in spite of her own



MASSACRES A PARIS LES 2, 3, 4, 5 ET 6 SEPTEMBRE 1792  
D'après une estampe allemande conservée à la Bibliothèque nationale. — A gauche, le couvent des Carmes où fut égorgé l'archevêque d'Autun qui offrit son sang pour apaiser les meurtriers; à droite, est dépeint le prison de l'Abbaye; au fond, le Temple; et, sur une terrasse, Louis XVI et Marie-Antoinette à laquelle un faroucé présente la tête de la princesse de Lamballe au bout d'une pique. A cette vue, la reine s'évanouit. — Le 2 septembre, au bruit du tocsin ordonné par Danton, la tuerie commença, elle dura six jours et cinq nuits. On compte 1,308 meurtres (MONTIGNY-TERNAUX, *Histoire de la Terreur*, III, p. 548); et, parmi les morts, deux cent cinquante prêtres, trois évêques ou archevêques, des officiers généraux, des magistrats, un ancien ministre, une princesse du sang, un nègre, des femmes du peuple, des gamins, des forçats, de vieux pauvres (Taine, *La Révolution*, II, p. 307.)

Figure 6.5. September Massacres, Paris, French Revolution, 1792. Illustration for *La Revolution 1789-1882* by Charles D’Hericault (D Dumoulin, 1883).

acknowledgement that the subject of her play would offend audience members, Inchbald felt compelled to record the “facts” of the French Revolution in dramatic form. Though her play was not performed (and not until 2009 did her play make its debut in Britain),<sup>22</sup> the writing of this play suggests how women playwrights in England were beginning to make political statements about particularly “unfeminine topics” such as war.<sup>23</sup>

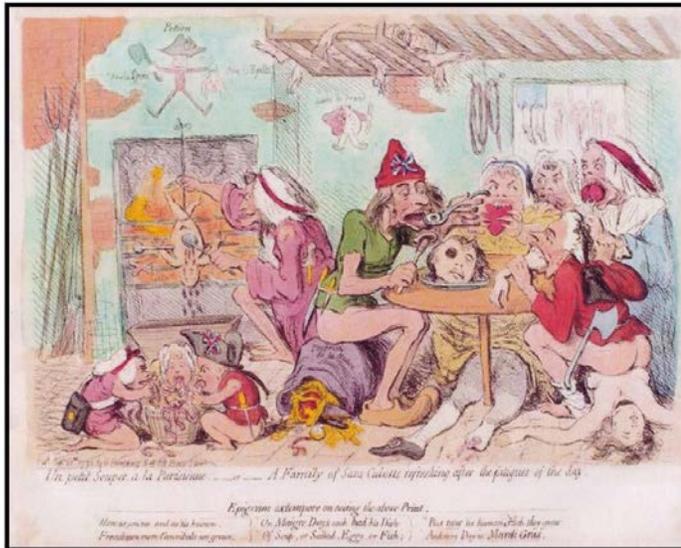


Figure 6.6. *A Free Nation? ‘Un Petit Souper à la Parisienne...’* Infamous and striking print by English artist, James Gillray portrays the September Massacres, 1792, which heralded the beginning of the radical phase and the Terror - remarkably made while the Massacres actually taking place.

Although Elizabeth Inchbald’s tragedy, *The Massacre* (1792) was not published until 1833, her three-act tragedy closely parallels much of the action of Mercier’s above-mentioned three-act tragedy, *Jean Hennuyer, the Bishop of Lizieux*, including an almost identical scene wherein a bloodied husband returns home to his wife and father from Paris

in the aftermath of chaotic and murderous violence. For Mercier, the events followed St. Bartholomew’s Day, 23-24 August 1572; for Inchbald, the events followed the September Massacres in Paris. And just like Eusèbe in Inchbald’s play, Arsenne Junior in Mercier’s tragedy is covered in the blood of his relations when he returns home. Likewise, Inchbald’s Madame Tricastin, Eusèbe’s wife, has her double in Mercier’s Laura, Arsenne’s wife, whose friend Susanna (like Madame Tricastin’s Amédée) joins her onstage and engages in light feminine discourse. However, the Catholic Inchbald does not base her play on a religious revolt, but rather places her play within the social and political violence of the fairly recent events of the September

Massacres when men, women and children enacted murderous riots in the streets of Paris. The entire action of the play also takes place over the course of one day. Wendy Nielsen argues that “Events in France like the September Massacres unsettled Burkean notions of femininity and raised the possibility of female violence.”<sup>24</sup> Nielsen further suggests that “Inchbald’s tragedy critiques the comic improbability that women stand to lose their femininity if they involve themselves in public issues.”<sup>25</sup> Rather than lose their femininity then and join in the murderous riots or even in conversations about them, Inchbald chooses to have her women maintain their “defenseless” femininity. But at what cost?

Violence is certainly at the center of Inchbald’s play, though most of the bodies that fall are those of women and children. This choice of feminine/child fragility relates directly to her own fear that silencing or overly protecting women leads to their inevitable and horrific death. George C. Grinnell comments, “Placing [Inchbald’s] work within the context of recent considerations of sublime violence [in France]...can ethical engagement with pressing events also challenge the complexity of violence rather than assume its immediate intelligibility, a challenge that lengthens and foreshortens our imagined distance from terror?”<sup>26</sup> In other words, since violence is complex, can one question the ethics of violence on various levels and if so, does that imagined violence become more or less real in light of the real violence that occurs?

The violence against women is extreme. Only two women appear onstage in *The Massacre*, (vs. the thirteen “named” characters that appear in the list of men that includes additional unnamed attendants and soldiers). These female characters are Madame Tricastin and her friend Amédée.<sup>27</sup> As a tragedy and as a violent play (warning given in the Advertisement), it is not surprising that the number of women included might be limited and yet the violence to women far exceeds the violence to men. Madame Tricastin tries to protect her children with her own body but fails, and thus she literally fails at being a mother. When she sees one of her children slaughtered, her will to live disappears and pressing her youngest child to her chest, both

Madame Tricastin and the child die when the sword pierces both of them—serving both as a figurative reminder that a mother is nothing without her children and a literal reminder that a mother's/woman's place, even in death, is with her children, not active within the violent political discourse. Madame Tricastin's actions and her responses to violence are indeed very different from those of her husband, Eusèbe. While Madame Tricastin dies at the hands of the murderous mob, covered in the blood of her children Eusèbe, who fails to protect his wife's family is actually protected from the murderous mob by the blood of his own mother-in-law and for protection he carries the very dagger that had murdered her. The bloody corpses of Madame Tricastin and her two children make their way literally onto the stage, along with a symbolic reminder of Madame Tricastin's murdered mother in the form of the bloodied knife Eusèbe carries with him. Eusèbe is actually protected by women and women's blood (read even more deeply in women's cyclical menses), whose sacrifices led to their deaths, rather than his death in protecting them. The very last image onstage of Madame Tricastin is of her being carried on a bier, frozen in an embrace with her dead children—a silent representative of femininity, motherhood, and a reminder of how women can fall victims to violence if they are not allowed to enter into these conversations, and must rely on the protection of men.

How Inchbald presents women in *The Massacre* turn her work into a gendered discourse on the violence of politics and the inability of men to protect women who are sequestered in safety. Inchbald's work, written on the cusp of the nineteenth century can be examined in the views of Tracy Davis who argues that "the nineteenth-century model of separate spheres cast the public realm as the place where individuals defended the family (equated to the private) from state domination while debating the proper roles for the sexes."<sup>28</sup> Inchbald's public/private retelling of the French tragedy ironically places the murders of the women and children within their homes where the absent (or senseless) men cannot defend them.

Madame Tricastin both opens and closes the play—her words are the first we hear as she worries in an overtly feminine manner about the whereabouts of her husband in the private space of her “saloon,” and her image is one of the last we see as her dead body is carried offstage on a bier with her husband and father-in-law trailing behind in slow procession. Her initial words and her inability to speak after death reinforce the idea that women (and Inchbald) may control the narrative but they do not control the action. Eusèbe is not even the man to whom Madame Tricastin confesses her last words. Instead another man fills in for her husband and Rochelle relates to Eusèbe her last moments as he attempted to protect her from the mob. Rochelle tells Eusèbe, “her desire to save her life had subsided; for, she had beheld her two children slain. The eldest, to the last, she held fast by the hand—the youngest she pressed violently to her bosom, and, struggling to preserve, received the murderer’s blow through its breast to her own.”<sup>29</sup> Her willingness to die for her children is much more evident onstage than Eusèbe’s willingness to die for his relations. Even more compelling is the fact that Eusèbe’s encounters with the Paris mob take place offstage and so we do not *see* how Eusèbe acts but rather *hear* how he acts making once again a man’s words more compelling and present than his actions. In addition, Madame Tricastin stands in as both martyr and politically silenced individual—her femininity (motherhood, desire to flee, protectiveness over her children and husband) and thus her acceptable normative female behavior cause her death.

In his confession to Eusèbe, Rochelle also recounts Madame Tricastin’s dying words that she meant to comfort him, “Tell Eusèbe (since he was not there to protect her) I die contented, with my children; and entreat him not to grieve at what he may think I suffered at my death; for my pain, except for him I leave behind, is trivial.”<sup>30</sup> Thus it is not her own body or the bodies of her children that worry her most as she faces death, but that her husband might be grieved. She wishes to protect him even though he failed to protect her (or allow her to protect herself). Eusèbe responds to her last words by calling her a “dying saint.”<sup>31</sup> Once again we see that women fall

during *The Massacre* while men live to tell their stories, memorialize their women, and continue to hold them up (and thus to separate and seclude them) on a pedestal. In describing the violence that ensues in this politically gendered space amidst social inequality Inchbald clearly suggests that women suffer from the political violence of men and while bourgeois dominance may save Eusèbe and his father, the women and children in his family perish. Indeed women for Inchbald are victimized *because* of their removal from political discourse and it is the father/son-in-law/husband, Eusèbe, who emerges physically unharmed, gripping a knife soaked with the blood of his family.

Inchbald's play predates the murder of Jean-Paul Marat by Charlotte Corday (the subject of Sarah Pogson-Smith's play, *The Female Enthusiast*) by six months, though it was known that women took part in the violence of the French Revolution as early as 6 October 1789 when Parisian women marched on Versailles demanding both bread and the removal of the Royal family from the palace. By summer 1792, women (and children) in France were participating in the murder of Swiss guards during the attack on Tuileries Palace. This attack was a critical point in the French Revolution that resulted in the overthrow of the French monarchy. While many responses to the violence of French women in Britain during the 1790s condemned these acts in literature, Inchbald's play takes a unique approach and endorses women's political and military involvement.<sup>32</sup> Women who do not stand up for themselves and take the figurative dagger (as held by Eusèbe) end up victims of the violence though in actuality, it is because the non-violent Eusèbe runs around Paris bloodied and holding the dagger that he is protected from the murderous mob with whom he is associated by appearance. Inchbald clearly suggests that women suffer from the political violence of men and while bourgeois dominance may save Eusèbe and his father, the women and children in his family perish. Tragedies like Inchbald's traditionally question social realities. While her work may not have reflected specifically the social reality of either the French Revolution or of the Jacobin/Anti-Jacobin factions in Britain, her tragedy,

circumscribed by the act of reading instead of in performance, presented problems in society that reflected the world of women who were likewise contained and separated from the political realm. Inchbald's play, like the plays of the other two women playwrights in this chapter, acted as social barometers by which the horrors of revolution and questions of liberty, freedom of thought, and political engagement might be measured.

### **Sarah Pogson Smith: Murder, Martyrdom, and Memory in *The Female Enthusiast* (1807)**

In 1807 Sarah Pogson Smith anonymously published ('by a Lady') *The Female Enthusiast*,<sup>33</sup> a tragedy that examined Charlotte Corday's 1793 murder of Jean-Paul Marat. Pogson Smith published her play anonymously, unlike the other two women playwrights in this chapter, suggesting that she did not want to risk public censure in publishing or producing her play and that she did not feel it appropriate for a woman. As Pogson Smith was also living in Charleston, South Carolina, amongst a large French population, her play may have been performed there, though people sympathetic to the French Revolution might have misinterpreted Pogson Smith's play as anti-French.<sup>34</sup>

Pogson Smith's anonymity in publishing her play actually permeates our understanding of her since very little information is known about her life. Amelia Howe Kritzer claims that Pogson Smith was born in Essex, England to John Pogson, an English planter from the West Indies and Ann Wood Pogson in 1774 and that they immigrated to Charleston, South Carolina in 1788 or 1793 (the dates on her gravestone are indecipherable).<sup>35</sup> Pogson Smith may have lived in the West Indies before moving with her parents to Charleston. Their move to America may have been prompted by the outbreak of violence from the Haitian Revolution that began in 1791, one of the largest and most successful slave rebellions in the transatlantic region. Pogson Smith was the second wife of a man named Peter Smith, with whom all indications suggest she had a

troubled marriage that led to an early separation. She eventually lived with her sister in Charleston, where she died in 1870. The *Cambridge Companion to American Women Playwrights* calls Pogson Smith “another virtual unknown” and in *Transatlantic Feminisms in the Age of Revolution* editors Lisa L. Moore, Joanna Brooks, and Caroline Wigginton argue that “An English émigré to South Carolina and a witness to the first decades of American nationhood, Pogson Smith may have been fearful of the potential tyranny of the masses as well as slave rebellion, made undeniable by Charleston’s many white refugees of the Haitian Revolution.”<sup>36</sup> Certainly the idea of revolutions, tyranny, slave revolts, and women’s place in this changing and changed society influenced Pogson Smith’s work, both *The Female Enthusiast*, which she published in 1807 and which we will discuss in this section, and her later comedy, *The Young Carolinians* published in 1818, which, like Rowson’s play *Slaves in Algiers*, examined the captivity of Americans by Algerians.<sup>37</sup> Both of Pogson Smith’s plays reflect her vision of a female’s role in helping to establish social justice, though it is her first play that informs this study.

Unlike Inchbald’s tragedy, Pogson Smith chose to glorify and justify what she considers to be a selfless act of violence that Corday commits in order to stop further violence. Pogson Smith also wrote her plays with the benefit of the distance of time, unlike Inchbald’s play that was written and printed in a matter of months under the shadow of the September Massacres or Rowson’s play that was written during the period of active Algerian captivities. Contemporary commentary also informed the plays of Inchbald and Rowson since both the September Massacres and the enslavement of Americans by Algerian pirates were widely written about in newspapers, discussed and debated in public, and caused anxiety and fear. *The Massacre* and *Slaves in Algiers* were not written with historical perspective, but can be seen as literature of the moment. Pogson Smith’s play, on the other hand, was written with a sense of distance, albeit not significant distance, from the events themselves. *The Female Enthusiast* was published fourteen

years after Corday's murder of Marat and a handful of years after the conclusion of the Haitian Revolution.<sup>38</sup> *The Female Enthusiast* also discusses important themes such as republicanism, tyranny, and memory, and calls upon the audience to sympathize with Charlotte. Pogson Smith creates a politically active and murderous female character through her presentation of Charlotte Corday as a thoughtful, honorable, and determined—albeit murderous—woman. Because their plays both addressed events in France, this section also looks to recognize how differently Inchbald and Pogson Smith presented their views on events during the French Revolution.

Both Inchbald's and Pogson Smith's plays begin with a character waiting for their loved one although the sexes are switched—in Inchbald's play it is Madame Tricastin who awaits her husband's return and in Pogson Smith's play it is Henry's servant Jacques who awaits his sweetheart. Unlike Inchbald's three-act play, however, which includes only two female characters onstage (and one only very briefly), and focuses on the assault and murder of innocent victims by a tyrannous mob over a matter of hours, Pogson Smith's play involves numerous female characters, each of whom has a love interest. Charlotte, of course, believes she is sacrificing her life in murdering Marat in order to save humanity since she believes "That cruel man destroyed without offense / His fellow creature man."<sup>39</sup> *The Female Enthusiast* also has a secondary plotline that follows Charlotte's brother, Henry, who secretly marries Estelle, Charlotte's childhood friend, out from under his friend's (and Estelle's betrothed's) nose. Indeed, central to each of these plays is the idea of love and the sacrifices characters are willing to make for their beloved.

In contrast with *The Massacre*, written fifteen years earlier, the central character in Pogson Smith's tragedy is Charlotte Corday who is the onstage cause of violence and who wields the bloody knife, as she claims, to protect others; "My hand shall save them. / The innocent again shall walk in safety. / Thousands shall bless the blow by which he [Marat] falls."<sup>40</sup> Here, Pogson Smith clearly and directly challenges society's views of whether or not a woman can be responsible for murder—intentional, calculated, and for Charlotte, justified. Charlotte under

Pogson Smith's narrative crafting, possesses a strong moral character, and emerges as a woman to be admired, in spite of her actions. Early on in the play, Pogson Smith comments on Corday's troubled state and provides Corday with reasons for her actions,

Had I stayed in peaceful ignorance— (suggested by Inchbald as dangerous to women)  
That duty which led me first to ask of wars,  
And governments, and other scenes than those  
Enfolding sweet domestic harmony.  
Then to a wider field my views were opened... But oppression  
Stalks abroad, and stains even the peaceful  
Paths of life with blood! Mercilous ferocity  
Sways, with an uncontrolled dominion!  
A monster spread destruction! And while he  
Desolates, calls out aloud, "Tis liberty"  
Why do his black deeds remain unpunished?  
Is there not one avenging hand to strike?<sup>41</sup>

In these few lines Pogson addresses war, government, domesticity, blood, liberty and punishment, not themes common in Anglophone women's plays before this period, except, perhaps for Inchbald's *The Massacre*, which also addresses the horrors of the French Revolution, does not make women out to be such powerful actors within the unfolding political drama.

In the case of Pogson Smith's play, love protects just as much as love (or sense of duty to protect others) kills. It is Estelle's love and her consent to marry Henry without her father's permission that saves Charlotte's brother from running after his sister and becoming the murderer himself. Estelle cries out, "I see thy rash design. Impetuous, / Thou wilt plunge thyself into destruction / Not save thy sister" and in order to prevent him, she agrees, "To blend my life with thine this hour, Henry" so that he "wilt endeavor to preserve [his life]."<sup>42</sup> So while several factors might have saved Charlotte in Pogson Smith's (not very historically accurate but highly entertaining) version of events, including a delayed letter and a secret wedding, Charlotte herself kills Marat in one of the most intimate and physically demanding methods with a knife.

The juxtaposition of Estelle and Henry's elopement on the eve of Charlotte's murder of Marat poignantly reflects the life and feminine ideal existence (according to contemporary social

norms) that Charlotte *might* have had as wife/mother/sister. Indeed, descriptions of Charlotte constantly remind the reader of her female vulnerability and fragility: the “tear of anguish” she sheds in front of Jacques at the beginning of the play, and her confession that had not her lover been called to war, she would have “stayed in peaceful ignorance...Enfolding sweet domestic harmony.”<sup>43</sup> Yet, the



Figure 6.7. Joseph Roques - *La mort de Marat* – 1793.

awakening of Charlotte’s senses to war allowed her heart, once limited by feminine desires of domestic comfort, to become “alive / To virtue and humanity” and awakened her awareness that “oppression / Stalks abroad, and stains even the peaceful / Paths of life with blood.”<sup>44</sup>

Reciprocally, Henry, Charlotte’s brother, confesses “the bias of [his] mind / Fondly inclines to sweet domestic life” although he, like Charlotte is drawn to act because of “principle, love of true liberty, / And [his] torn country’s welfare.”<sup>45</sup> And while Charlotte is not portrayed as a natural killer, the image of the “monster” Marat hardens her resolve so that she can only imagine him with horror; Marat “Steals every thought, and female weakness flies / With strength I’m armed, and mighty energy / To crush the murderer, and defy the scaffold.”<sup>46</sup> Just as Inchbald’s Madame Tricardin sacrifices herself in trying to save her children, Charlotte confesses that “For it [Marat’s murder], *I’ll die!* For it, I sacrifice—I quit—myself / And all the softness of a woman’s name.”<sup>47</sup> Thus Charlotte abandons her feminine self in order to kill a man rather than marry one.

While her comments suggest contemporary society's views on femininity and female social norms, including the view that women are not natural murderers, there is no reason to believe that women could not and did not participate in murder, particularly since women during the French Revolution were highly involved in violent displays of aggression. Inchbald's tragedy suggests that it is Madame Tricastin's absence from political discourse or the ability to pick up arms to defend herself that leads to her demise—her unsuccessful attempt to protect her children from the murderous mob in her own home occurs when her husband and natural protector is absent and because he refused to give her a weapon to defend herself, claiming he would rather see her die than lose her femininity, she is literally left defenseless. Eusèbe's inability to act, however, leads to the deaths of his wife and children, much Henry's (or any other male's) inability to act in Pogson's play, leads to his sister's death—not because she was defenseless though, but because she was defensive. Thus *The Female Enthusiast*, as her title suggests places a woman into the control of the action. It is Charlotte's intense and visionary views that lead her to act, to destroy herself just as she protects others in a way that Madame Tricastin never can. Charlotte embraces political discourse because no male hand is willing to pick up a weapon to kill Marat. Thus because of male inaction, she takes it upon herself, defeminizes herself as it were, to kill the murderous Marat. And just in the same way that Eusèbe runs away in order to protect himself, so, too, does Henry run away (literally with Estelle—following his “star”), failing to protect his sister when he might have stepped up and sacrificed himself by committing Marat's murder himself. Further, Charlotte's willingness to sacrifice her life and her honor for the preservation of her fellow citizens and for patriotic intentions trumps all acts men commit in the play. Charlotte even protects her brother and covers for Henry when he comes to visit her in prison (bearing news of the murder of their father by Marat partisans), calling him her lover. Not stopping there, she even tries to protect the guard who knowingly allowed her brother to visit her in prison, though her protection fails and he is stabbed and dies. While an angry crowd outside

prison chants “To the guillotine” much like the angry crowd that swarmed around and killed Madame Tricastin, under Pogson Smith’s influence, Charlotte does not allow herself to fall victim and provides protection for her brother, who escapes and returns to his beloved Estelle and with whom he will eventually share a happily ever after ending in marriage. De Vernueil, Charlotte’s betrothed, however, is not left unscathed by Charlotte’s actions or her capture and eventual execution. Recognizing his inability to step up and murder Marat himself, or to protect Charlotte from killing Marat or defeminizing herself through murder, he kills himself, committing suicide with a small pistol after he sees his beloved Charlotte, like Madame Tricastin, being carried away after her execution. The differences in their removal from the stage are slight but significant. Charlotte’s body is born off hidden in a coffin (suggestive of physical containment of her female body and of her burial/movement downward toward Hell), while Madame Tricastin’s body is showcased on a bier (suggestive of her ethereal “saintly” nature held literally on a pedestal and of her movement upward toward Heaven).

In writing *The Female Enthusiast* Pogson Smith makes her play a uniquely transatlantic affair. Writing from Charleston, South Carolina, and having lived in the West Indies and Britain, and writing her play after the conclusion of the American, French and Haitian Revolutions—Pogson Smith manages to make reference to and comment on all three revolutions. Twice America is mentioned in *The Female Enthusiast* as the ideal republican environment where liberty is embraced in a manner not known in the socially and politically unstable France. The first mention occurs when Duval tells his daughter, Estelle, that there does exist a land in which women can be safe, unlike France,

There is a land where such indeed’s the case  
[virtuous industry rewarded with competence]  
Not *thine*, my child. It is America.  
There, in the conjugal or single state—  
In affluence or pale-cheeked poverty—  
Each female who respects herself is safe.  
Each walks the path of life secure from insult,  
As strongly guarded by a virtuous mind

As she who's in a gilded chariot borne.<sup>48</sup>

America is mentioned again at the play's conclusion, and once again it is associated with Estelle, who, unlike Charlotte, is worthy of dwelling in that land because of her goodness, purity of mind and appropriately domestic choices. Like Estelle's father, who recognizes in America that women

“in the conjugal or single state...Each female who respects herself is safe,” Henry tells Estelle, “we must part, and cross the Atlantic wave-- / Seek that repose we cannot here possess...Under the protection of America, / Domestic ease securely reposes. / There, we may yet enjoy tranquility; / And, 'midst the sons of true-born liberty, / Taste the pure blessings that from freedom flow.”<sup>49</sup> Thus Estelle and

Henry will depart in a conjugal state, to America, where they may enjoy tranquility and freedom.



Figure 6.8. *Charlotte Corday* by Paul Jacques Aimé Baudry, posthumous (1860).

While the play is certainly a tragedy with Charlotte's significant death and the murders of a large number of people including Marat's murder and De Vernueil's suicide (onstage violence in *The Female Enthusiast* is certainly much more significant and visually horrific than in either *The Massacre* or *Slaves in Algiers*), the play actually ends in a rather traditionally optimistic



governmental control through violence. The Haitian Revolution, too, saw the lower classes—in this case slaves—rise up into power through violent force, first under the control of Toussaint Louverture (also known as "Napoléon Noir" or *Black Napoleon*), who was the leader of the Haitian Revolution, then under ex-slave Jean-Jacques Dessalines, who declared Haiti's independence from France in 1804.

Finally, it is important to note that while Pogson Smith lauds Charlotte's actions as noble and justifies the murder of one individual in an attempt to save a much larger group, an argument often used when discussing the legitimacy of violence, it is really the failure of society—male society—to protect Charlotte (and all of the other innocents) that comes through in this play. However, Charlotte is not the only one sacrificed and men also fall victim to this needless violence. Charlotte's father is murdered by a mob of Marat supporters seeking vengeance for his death. The young boy in a family Charlotte cares for is cut down by a mobster's sword as he tries to defend Charlotte's fiancé, De Vernueil. The guard who allows Henry to see Charlotte in jail is stabbed and killed, and De Vernueil takes his own life, violently shooting himself and committing the ultimate sin because he does not want to live in a world without Charlotte or the goodness and purity she represents.

Published as it was in 1807, Pogson Smith's play certainly comments on the idealized state of America as a New Republic. Unlike Rowson and Inchbald, Pogson Smith did not live through the American Revolution, and she was quite young during the French Revolution—at least the time period about which she writes in this play. But she would have been much more aware of the Haitian Revolution, partly because her father was from the West Indies and may have had connections with Haiti, and partly because she lived in Charleston where a number of white Haitian immigrants now lived in order to escape from the violent revolution. Unlike the American and French Revolutions where clothing styles differentiated between enemies, the Haitian Revolution was based on race as slaves revolted against their white owners. Pogson

Smith would have been very aware of the murderous violence of mob mentality, the dread it invoked, and how a despotic or cruel leader might be feared. Thus Pogson Smith's play not only examines the French Revolution in looking directly (if somewhat fictitiously) at Charlotte Corday's murder of Marat, but it also comments directly on her idealized views of American republicanism and indirectly on her fear and condemnation of revolutionary violence as it took place almost simultaneously in France and in Haiti. Pogson Smith's play, *The Female Enthusiast*, therefore, comes closest in these three plays, to crafting a powerful commentary on the transatlantic nature of Revolution, Republicanism, and female intervention.

The real story of Marie-Anne Charlotte Corday suggests how Pogson Smith shaped her own interpretation of the story influenced by contemporary views of revolution, republicanism, liberty, domesticity and the roles of women in western society. The fourth child and the daughter of a noble, Jacques-Francois de Corday d'Armont, Charlotte was born in 1768 and was fourteen when her mother died in 1782. She was educated in a convent in Caen, Normandy, and had initially supported the monarchy at the beginning of the Revolutionary events, though she soon changed to

supporting the moderate Girondins (many of whom she had met when she lived in Caen) and not the more radical Jacobins (who began executing the Girondins in 1793). Marat was one of



Figure 6.11. *Charlotte Corday being conducted to her execution*. By Arturo Michelena, 1889.

those Jacobins who called for the execution of the Girondins. Charlotte left Caen for Paris, where she was better protected from harm. On 9 July 1793 she wrote an “Address to the French Who Are Friends of Law and Peace,” in which she explained her plan to murder Marat. Four days later, she entered Marat’s room with a table knife, claiming to have information for him. Marat eventually admitted her. He was in his bath attempting relief from a skin



Figure 6.12. Pastel, *Charlotte Corday*, Versailles, Musée Lambinet, by Jean-Jacques Hauer, 1793.

condition and that was where Charlotte murdered him. Arrested immediately as the dying Marat cried out, Charlotte was taken to the prison of l’Abbaye, and since she completely assumed responsibility for her crime, she was not put in solitary confinement and was allowed to speak with prisoners (unlike Pogson Smith’s retelling where Charlotte is isolated). She was tried quickly, convicted by Revolutionary Tribunal, and executed by guillotine on 17 July 1793, just ten days short of her twenty-fifth birthday. Charlotte wanted to be remembered for her attempt to save France and numerous innocent lives. On 15 July 1793, Charlotte Corday wrote a letter (she was allowed pen, ink and paper in prison) to “Citizens composing the Committee of Public Safety” asking “As I have still a little while to live, may I hope, citizens, that you will permit my portrait to be painted. I should like to leave this token of remembrance to my friends...If you

deign to notice my request, I beg you to send me a miniature painter to-morrow.” And signed it “Marie Corday.”<sup>51</sup> She requested her portrait be made and it was drawn up during her appearance in court and completed over her last hours in prison (See Figure 6. 12).

Charlotte believed her actions would lead to significant change in the nation and that all of France would eventually celebrate her actions. However, Charlotte’s murder of Marat did little to change life for the Girondins other than her being idealized in portraiture and literature where memory becomes imposed by the ideas, experiences and beliefs of those “re-membering” an event. In 1847, over fifty years later, Charlotte Corday was given the nickname, “*l’ange de l’assassinat*” (the Angel of Assassination) by French writer and politician, Alphonse de Lamartine. Indeed, in Arturo Michelena’s portrait of Corday heading to her execution (Fig. 6.11) the illumination on Charlotte (along with her upright posture) suggest her “angel” stature and just as de Lamartine called her an angel of assassination, so, too, does her last portrait taken while alive reflect her innocence. She is painted in white, her hair down as a young girl might wear it. Charlotte looks straight at the audience, her lips slightly parted as if she wants to speak, the hand that struck the fatal blow to Marat clearly visible (See Figure 6.12). This image is her lasting legacy, along with her murder of Marat, told and retold, imagined and remembered in various ways. Pogson Smith’s idealized retelling of Charlotte’s murder and death highlights her belief in America as a true representative of republican values and her fear of mob violence, a threat that must have felt real to her living in Charleston amongst white Haitian refugees and black slaves.

Pogson Smith’s play presents a complicated impression of Charlotte Corday as both murderer and victim, protectress of the innocent and an unprotected and vulnerable woman. Pogson Smith was not the only artist fascinated by Corday’s character, nor was she the only person to find Charlotte’s story worth retelling. In his work on *The French Revolution: A History* (1837) Thomas Carlyle dedicated a section to Charlotte Corday, in which he describes her act of murdering Marat; “Charlotte has drawn her knife from the sheath; plunges it, with one sure

stroke, into the writer's heart. "A moi, chere amie, Help, dear!" No more could the death-choked say or shriek. The helpful Washerwoman running in, there is no Friend of the People, or Friend of the Washerwoman, left; but his life with a groan gushes out, indignant, to the shades below."<sup>52</sup> In addition, Carlyle adds to the drama writing;

"all these details are needless," interrupted Charlotte, "it is I that killed Marat." By whose instigation?—"By no ones'." What tempted you, then? His crimes. "I killed one man," added she, raising her voice extremely (*extremement*), as they went on with their questions, "I killed one man to save a hundred thousand; a villain to save innocents; a savage wild-beast to give repose to my country. I was a Republican before the Revolution; I never wanted energy." There is therefore nothing to be said. The public gazes astonished; the hasty limners sketch her features, Charlotte not disapproving; the men of law proceed with their formalities. The doom is Death as a murderess. To her Advocate she gives thanks; in gentle phrase, in high-flown classical spirit. To the Priest they send her she gives thanks; but needs not any shriving, or ghostly or other aid from him.<sup>53</sup>

In addition to written descriptions of Charlotte's murder of Marat that were passed down through the decades, her actions were memorialized in at least three important portraits, two of which were painted in 1793, the year she killed Marat. Her trial was characterized in a graphic British cartoon published ten days after her execution, and another painting was made of Corday heading to her execution in 1889, suggesting that Charlotte's sacrifice and her selfless if violent act continued to resonate within the public's mind so that numerous artists long after her death idealized Charlotte's beauty, courage, and actions. Charlotte, many biographers claim, wanted to be well-known throughout France, and wished for the memory of her to be a rallying cry as, what she hoped would be, the last victim of the bloody Revolution. Ironically, just as Charlotte Corday was not afraid to face her accusers and did not see any shame in her act, Sarah Pogson Smith published her work anonymously, fearing public censure that the violence of her play might be thought (like Charlotte's murder of Marat) unfeminine.

Pogson Smith lived in an American social system that increasingly feared slave revolts (particularly in the lower southern states like South Carolina), idealized the role of domesticity for women, and saw women as responsible for raising "republican" citizens (as discussed in

Linda Kerber's idea of Republican Motherhood for example). Pogson Smith's world embraced a more conservative view of women more generally and hers was not the same world in which Inchbald had written *The Massacre*, nor was it the same world in which Susanna Rowson had written and produced *Slaves in Algiers; or, A Struggle for Freedom* in 1794. Rowson's *Slaves in Algiers*, the play we examine next, with its much less violent though palpable tension present in an underlying threat of rape or sexual oppression rather than in actual violence, presents the narrative of American women abducted in a foreign land. Even when they are enslaved, Rowson's women uphold and teach others about America's republican ideals of liberty and equality, ideals admired and lauded by the male characters in Pogson Smith's play and embraced by the murderer/victim Charlotte. In Rowson's play women manage to be both feminine and republican, defenders of liberty and effective protectors of their families. Women are not physically sacrificed in Rowson's work, unlike the female characters in Inchbald's and Pogson's Smith's plays. Instead even in their difficult situations where they are captured, ticked, or oppressed by men, her female characters rise above their situations through their feminine intellect and republican convictions.

### **Captivating Women: Susanna Rowson**

Susanna Haswell Rowson (1762-1824) lived on both sides of the Atlantic in Britain and America both as a child and as an adult, giving her a unique perspective and notably the reason why she claimed such sympathy for the American cause. Rowson acted and wrote plays, novels, text books and songs, opened a school for young women, and became a recognized celebrity during her lifetime as an actress, playwright, novelist, and female educator. Her plays were publicly controversial because she asserted that women could and should respond to social and political debates. She publicly defended her views, and she supported her family (her husband

William Rowson a child Susanna adopted, William's son from one of his affairs) through her writing.

Marion Rust writes that "Rowson early demonstrated her capacity to reconcile seemingly intransigent cultural modes in her canny employment of sentimentalism's sensationalistic and didactic registers."<sup>54</sup> Further, Rust argues,

She developed this ability in her subsequent considerations of how women were to form part of the American nation...in full awareness of her vulnerability as an English expatriate and loyalist's daughter. Given Rowson's ever tenuous position within the social hierarchy she advanced through, it makes sense that her emphasis shifted, as she aged, from fascination with the female subject in isolation to more explicit consideration of her civic roles. It is also fitting that she would turn from novels, typically consumed in much-lamented, much-celebrated isolation, to plays songs, books, and other, more expressly public forms of entertainment.<sup>55</sup>

Indeed, Rowson was a highly productive and prolific author of many publications—novels, plays, songs, poems, text books—it seems that she continued to evolve as an author just as she moved through her life with various guises as motherless semi-orphan, loyalist's daughter, American Revolution prisoner, high-society London governess, actress, adoptive mother, wife, breadwinner, playwright, songwriter, poet, textbook author, schoolmistress. Rust states that Rowson serves "as a transatlantic figure who served to usher in the American sentimental moment" and that "she is crucial to our understanding of how the transatlantic context of eighteenth-century sensibility informed the American nineteenth century,"<sup>56</sup> and I would add that Rowson's success as author/performer was a direct result of her malleability and her American sensibility as it were to reshape and redefine her own character.

Rowson was born, like Inchbald (and possibly Pogson Smith) in England into a family with no associations with theatre. Yet her experience with theatre and as a novelist in England gave her credibility so that when she returned to America as an adult she became an admired and admirable public figure. While women playwrights in London, such as Elizabeth Inchbald, were focused on revolutionary changes in neighboring France, some women in North America were

responding to revolutionary changes in the New Republic.<sup>57</sup> As a transatlantic actress, author and promoter of women's rights, Rowson successfully crossed a variety of boundaries, both literally and figuratively. Because her life was lived transatlantically and because she experienced the American Revolution from a unique perspective as a child of a loyalist, prisoner of war, and as an exchanged prisoner returned to London, a brief outline of her early experiences actually adds to understanding what she wrote and why she wrote her novels, plays, poems and non-fiction work.

The self-conscious representation of Rowson as author (which reinforces her sense of agency as a writer) became translated into her various public personae. When her novel, *Charlotte Temple* was published in Philadelphia in 1794, a note on the front made her associations with theatre—and her accessibility—clear in writing that the author was “of the New Theatre.” Rowson mentioned in her Preface to *Trials of the Human Heart* another one of her novels and a play. She called herself a loyalist's child and a female author to further suggest her vulnerability and dependence on audience support and approval. As Rust comments, “she continually foregrounded her own female persona: her maternal presence in one novel, her sisterly guidance in school performances, her teasing eroticism at the end of her surviving play.”<sup>58</sup> Rust argues that “the most profound aspect of her professionalism, in fact, has to do with how [Rowson] took advantage not only of authorship's changing material conditions in the new Republic but also of its new discursive possibilities. Not least of these was a profound alteration in how and how deeply the author insinuated herself into the reader's mind.”<sup>59</sup> Indeed, Rust suggests that “While Rowson labored to make female professionalism evident and acceptable, her first critics worked just as hard to legitimate her presence in the public sphere precisely by denying her accountability to the market.”<sup>60</sup> Thus Rowson becomes a complicated public female figure appearing both as a conventional and idealized woman and as a loud, divisive harpy.

Rowson grew up without the presence of her mother or father and seems well-scripted for the stage. Susanna Musgrave Haswell died a few days after giving birth to Rowson, who was

subsequently raised by a nanny while her father sailed to America to take over as a British government official in Massachusetts. At age five, Rowson (then known as Susanna Haswell) moved to America, rejoining the father, William Haswell. Susanna's entry into America was rather harrowing as their ship ran aground on Lovell's Island in Boston Harbor and the passengers had to be rescued. Although much younger than Mercy Otis Warren and her brother James, the Haswell's were close family friends, though their association did not help them when her family (because of her father's Loyalist associations) was taken prisoner during the American Revolution. Rowson experienced the horrors of war and witnessed firsthand the burning of the Boston lighthouse, the invasion of her home by American soldiers, and the death of the British marine in front of her eyes, events that were never forgotten by thirteen year old Susanna; "This was a day never to be obliterated from the mind of the author, who partook of all its horrors, though but just emerging from a state of childhood."<sup>61</sup> Rowson also wrote about the unhappy circumstances surrounding her family during the years before war broke out, commenting;

Frightened at the horrid din of arms, hospitality fled her once favorite abode, mutual confidence was no more, and fraternal love gave place to jealousy, dissension, and blind party zeal. The son raised his unhallowed arm against his parent, brothers drenched their weapons in each other's blood, and all was horror and confusion. The terrified inhabitants of N----- left the village and took refuge in the more interior parts of the country.<sup>62</sup>

In late May 1778, Susanna Rowson's family packed up what little belongings they had still with them as prisoners of war and sailed on the ship *Industry* to Halifax, Nova Scotia, under a flag of truce. In June 1778, William Haswell, Susanna's father, was formally exchanged for Philip Duval, captain of the American privateer the *Rattlesnake*.<sup>63</sup> Following this prisoner exchange, her the Haswell family returned to England, and Susanna, still in her teens, became a political refugee. Such events etched themselves into Rowson's memory and there is no question that Rowson drew on her own experiences in the Revolutionary War for her work.<sup>64</sup> In fact, four of her novels use the American Revolution as the background for her stories. She became one of the

first women to write about the American Revolution after its conclusion and Rowson's plays, novels, poems, and songs were often infused with political commentary.

Resettled in London, Susanna took on the role of family provider since the experience as prisoners had been hard on her father and step-mother. She became a governess to the children of Georgiana Cavendish (1757-1806), the Duchess of Devonshire, to whom she dedicated *Victoria* (1786) her first work of fiction. She learned to move within the shadows of London's elite society and her connections through the Duchess of Devonshire must have provided her with some connections that led to her publications.

In 1786, Susanna Haswell married William Rowson, an occasional actor and trumpeter, when she was twenty-four. Following the failure of his hardware business William and Susanna Rowson turned to acting full time. Since William Rowson had been gainfully

employed in a variety of supporting positions by the Theatre Royal Covent Garden beginning in 1782 (trumpeter, singer, actor, prompter) it made sense for Susanna to join him and made

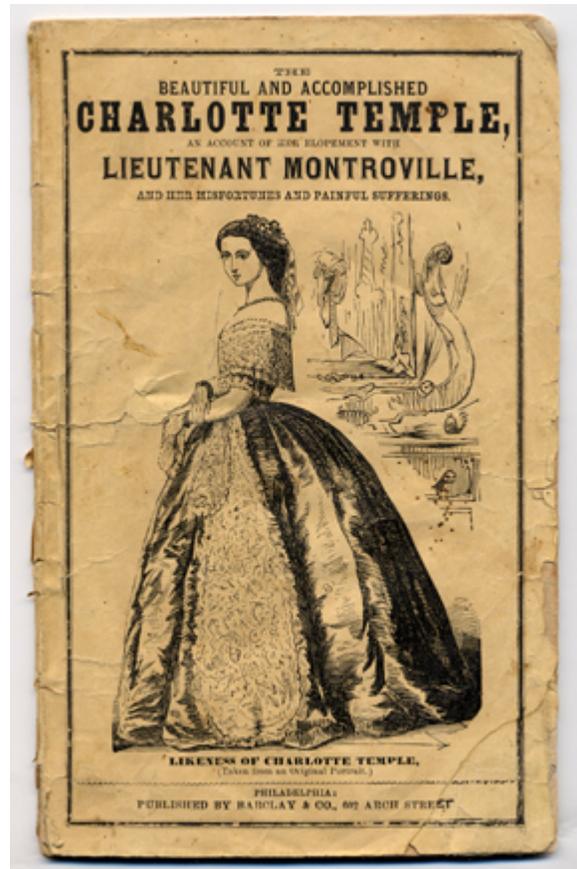


Figure 6.13. Susanna Rowson's novel, *Charlotte Temple* was more popular in America than in England. Another Rowson novel, *Rebecca: or the Fille de Chambre*, sold well in the United States with great success, though many of the editions were pirated copies since American copyright rules were lax with regards to intellectual property. At least 47 editions appeared before 1820. Most editions appeared in New York, Philadelphia and Boston (places in which Rowson performed actively) suggesting both the popularity of her work in the mid-Atlantic region and the likelihood that she helped promote her work through her performances.

transitioning into a public role as actress easier. She was joined onstage by her husband and her sister-in-law, Elizabeth (who died in October 1790). Family provider was a role she embraced, mostly out of necessity, her entire life.

It was during their engagement with London's Covent Garden Theatre that Thomas Wignell spotted the Rowsons as they did a summer tour in Edinburgh in 1793. He enlisted them to join his acting company at the new Chestnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia and perhaps eager to return to America, Susanna and her husband and sister-in-law all signed on to join Wignell's group. They sailed with a dozen other players to America just in time to arrive for the Yellow Fever outbreak that overwhelmed Philadelphia in 1793. Finding it both dangerous and empty, they took their group to Baltimore where they found a healthy and appreciative audience. They remained in Baltimore until Philadelphia was once again safe to inhabit.<sup>65</sup> The Yellow Fever outbreak delayed the proper opening of the Chestnut Street Theatre until February 1794.

By 1793, Susanna Rowson was already an established novelist and had successfully published six novels in England: *Victoria* (1786), *The Inquisitor* (1788), *Mary, or The Test of Honour* (1789), *Charlotte: a Tale of Truth* (1790; the novel was called *Charlotte Temple* after the publication of the third edition in America), *Mentoria* (1791), and *Rebecca, or The Fille de Chambre* (1792). Certainly her prospects as a novelist and as a moderately successful actress in Britain were high, so it is interesting that she chose to abandon her life in London to try her hand at acting and writing in America. Not long after her arrival in Philadelphia, Rowson took out advertisements in the *Philadelphia Gazette* announcing her intentions to have her novel *A Tale of Truth* published by Philadelphia printer, Mathew Carey.<sup>66</sup> Proceeds from her writings by law of covertures rightfully belonged to her husband so anything she made through her publications was her husband's property. Even copyrighting her work was not possible for her in 1794. Rowson was an immigrant (recent laws only protected "American" authors) and thus neither she nor her publisher, Mathew Carey, had any legal recourse against black market publications.<sup>67</sup> Thus while

writing was potentially a lucrative occupation for Rowson, the actual income she reaped from her publications was limited.

In a fever of activity, between 1794 and 1796 while she performed in Philadelphia, Rowson wrote and published five plays and one novel: *Slaves in Algiers; or, A Struggle for Freedom* (1794), *The Female Patriot* (1795), *The Volunteers* (1795), *Trials of the Human Heart* (1795, novel), *Americans in England* (1796) and *The American Tar* (1796). In 1796, Rowson and several other actors decided to remove to Boston's newly opened Federal Street Theatre. Rowson's engagement there was short-lived for Rowson and signaled the end of her acting and playwriting

career. When the company she had joined in Boston became bankrupt, she opened a school for girls and started the Young Ladies Academy in Boston. As she had succeeded in everything else she had done before in her life, Rowson became an exemplary headmistress of her own school, even when her own personal life was failing.

Rowson's many successes allowed her and her husband and their adopted children to live in comfort (including one of William's sons by another woman). By the end of her lifetime, Rowson left an impressive collection of work in the arts and in literature, a tribute to her

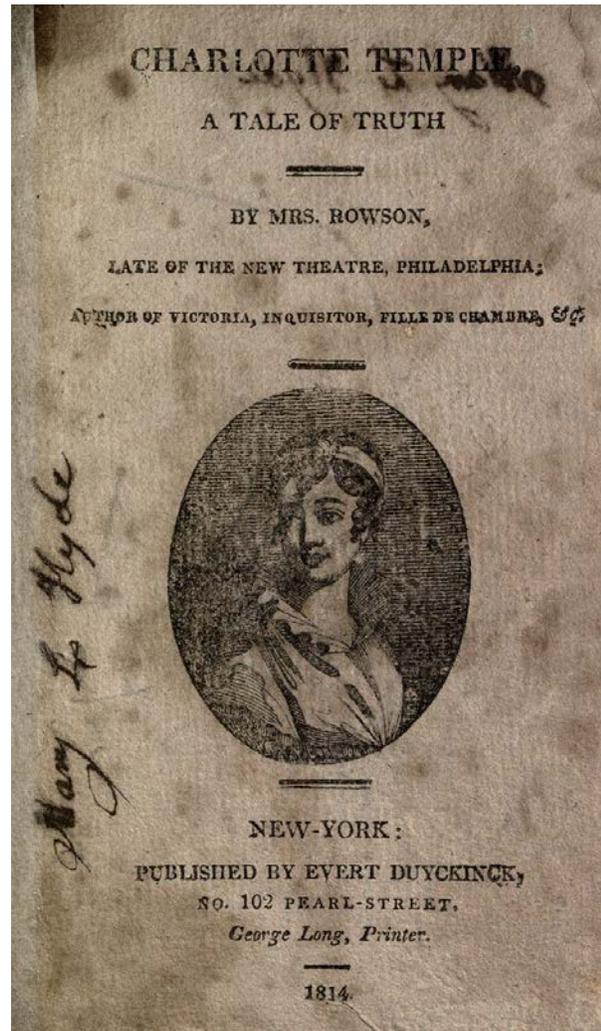


Figure 6.14. Image from an 1814 edition of Rowson's *Charlotte Temple* published in New York.

versatility and adaptability during a time when American itself was undergoing significant transformations. She moved from England to America, transformed herself from British to American, shifted from actor to lyricist, from playwright to headmistress, and from novelist to textbook author all while juggling her public persona and her own complicated private life all while maintaining an unblemished reputation.

Physically and ideologically, the female characters in Rowson's work traveled throughout the Atlantic world, just as she had herself traveled and explored

the Atlantic region. While she might not have experienced particular incidents within her works of fiction, her transatlantic experiences certainly flavored her works with a level of authenticity. For example, Charlotte Temple follows her lover from England to America, the American character in *Slaves in Algiers* are captive in the Barbary Coast, *Reuben and Rachel* explores various Atlantic travels through several generations of women and of course, *Americans in England* explores the lives of Americans post-revolution. Who knows what other works of fiction she might have created had she not seem the opportunity to recreate herself again as headmistress of her own girls school after she retired from stage in 1797.

While Rowson's plays and novels sold well in America, it was a risk for a woman to publish under her own name and not everyone was an admirer of her work. Deriding Rowson as



Figure 6.15 Susanna Rowson, courtesy of University of Virginia, Clifton Waller Barrett Library of American Literature.

the “American Sappho,” William Cobbett (1763-1835) published a short work, “A Kick for a Bite; or Review Upon Review, with a Critical Essay on the works of S. Rowson” (1795),<sup>68</sup>

The authoress insists upon the superiority of her sex, and in so doing, she takes care to express herself in such a correct, nervous, and elegant style, as puts her own superiority, at least, out of all manner of doubt. Nor does she confine her ideas to a superiority in the *belles lettres* only, as will appear by the following lines from her epilogue. ‘Women were born for universal sway, / Men to adore, *be silent*, and *obey*.’<sup>69</sup>

Cobbett even commented on Rowson’s patriotism, writing, “There are (I am sorry to say it), some people, who doubt [Rowson’s] sincerity, and who pretend her sudden conversion to republicanism, ought to make us look upon all her praises as ironical. But these uncandid people do not, or rather will not, recollect, what the miraculous air of America is capable of.”<sup>70</sup> George Seilhamer suggested in 1891 that the popularity and interest in Rowson’s *Slaves in Algiers* may have increased because of Cobbett’s remarks; Supporting Seilhamer’s argument, Rust suggests, “In addition to

popularizing her play,  
Cobbett’s attack  
inspired prominent  
progressives to come to  
her defense in print.”<sup>71</sup>

Her champions  
defended Rowson after  
Cobbett’s pamphlet was  
published, first in 1795  
with “Citizen Snub”

statesman and poet John Swanwick, and four years later with Rowson’s own publisher, Mathew Carey.<sup>72</sup> Cobbett reprimanded both Rowson and her public, claiming,



Figure 6.16 Chestnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia. Also known as the New Theatre and “Old Drury,” the Chestnut Street Theatre could seat as many as 1165 persons and was illuminated by oil lamps that were raised or lowered to light scenes. Courtesy Atwater Kent Museum Philadelphia.

Sins of omission are ever inexpiable when a lady is in the case; the fair do generally, in the long run, pardon since of commission, but those of omission they never do... You had here the fairest opportunity in the world of ingratiating yourself with the whole tribe of female scribblers and politicians; this opportunity you have neglected.<sup>73</sup>

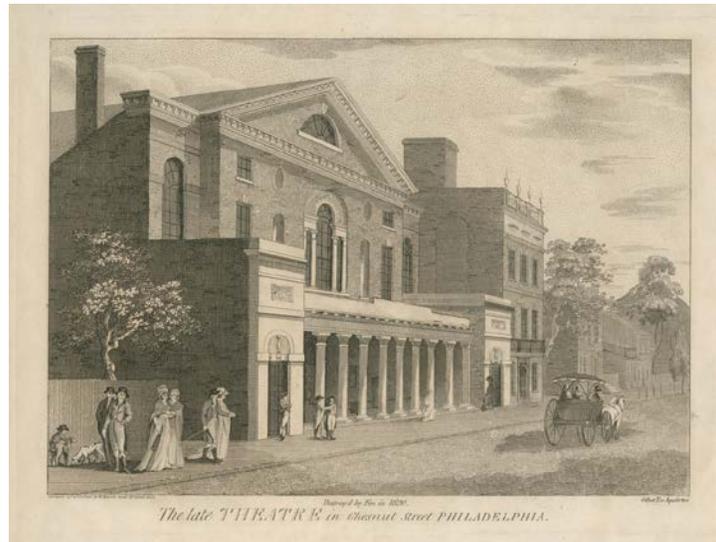


Figure 6.17 Chestnut Street Theatre, exterior. Etching by Gilbert Fox from Birch's Views. Courtesy of the Library Company of Philadelphia.

“If Rowson the author epitomized the manly woman as a figure for American republicanism,” Rust argues, “it was only by casting her as a reader that Cobbett commented on female gender itself.”<sup>74</sup> Cobbett’s argument suggests that women readers looked to see themselves in literature and that Rowson’s work instead of engaging and enlightening her readers, disappointed and reflected a poor image back to them, women and politicians alike.

While not all of Rowson’s readers were ready to accept women on equal terms with men and yet there certainly were readers—men and women—eager to attend performances of her plays and read her publications. On 22 December 1794 audiences attended a performance of her three-act play at the Chestnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia and by 1 January 1795, and copies of her recently performed play were again made available to the public. She also remained active performing. Between February and July 1794, Rowson appeared in at least sixty documented roles at the Chestnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia with Wignell’s company, mostly in minor and supporting roles.<sup>75</sup> She debuted in Philadelphia on 17 February as Charlotte, the heroine Elizabeth’s friend, in *Who’s the Dupe?* Hannah Cowley’s comedy that had first appeared in

London's Drury Lane Theatre in 1779. Two days later on 19 February Rowson acted the role of Nurse in David Garrick's version of Thomas Southerne's tragedy, *Isabella; or, The Fatal Marriage* (1694/1757). Between Monday, 17 February and Saturday, 8 March, Susanna Rowson performed twelve times in nineteen days with only one role repeated. Performances were generally given three times a week (often Monday, Wednesday and Friday) and new roles were memorized weekly. The number and variety of supporting roles taken on by Rowson in comedy, tragedy, dancing or singing, was impressive when compared with roles performed by other actresses in the company during this same period.<sup>76</sup> Rowson was also so popular as a lyricist that some of the most important musicians of the day (including Alexander Reinagle, partner to Thomas Wignell in the Chestnut Street Theatre, and Peter Van Hagen, who supplied arrangements and new music for comic operas and musicals) demanded her collaboration. Rowson wrote at least seven plays, only one of which, *Slaves in Algiers*, is extant, though reviews and comments about the remaining plays suggest that she knew how to entertain and engage her audience.<sup>77</sup>

### **Rowson's Captivity Narrative: *Slaves in Algiers; or A Struggle for Freedom***

Rowson's play emerged out of the early national period that saw increasing tensions between Federalists and Republicans and during a struggle that arose in defining who should be included in these conversations about citizenship in America. The kidnappings of over one hundred American citizens by Barbary Coast pirates generated significant conversations during the 1790s and Rowson, sensing the significance of bringing contemporary events to the stage in order to continue these conversations, wrote *Slaves in Algiers; or, A Struggle for Freedom* in 1794. A simple question arises in the play's extended title however, whose struggle is this, and how might one define freedom? As a woman, a recent immigrant to America, and a public figure,

Rowson experienced a variety of criticisms and restrictions, which she in turn wrote into her plays. Her voice, her characters, rise up out of her own experiences and the success of her various plays, including her first, *Slaves in Algiers*, resulted from her honest interpretation of events and her sincere belief in and appreciation for American ideals.

On Monday, June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1794, the day of the first performance in Philadelphia of *Slaves in Algiers*, a review praising Susanna Rowson's work appeared in *The Philadelphia Gazette*;

lovers of the novelties of the drama must be highly gratified at the performance of this evening, when will be introduced, for the first time on any stage, a new comedy, called the *Slaves in Algiers*, for the benefit of the authoress. Mrs. Rowson's celebrity of her pen has been acknowledged by all the literary reviewers of the old world—and we are happy to find she has lost nothing of her well earned merits in the estimation of the public in the western hemisphere. If we may judge from what we have already seen of her works, we hope the attractions of this comedy will ensure her the presence of her numerous well wishers.<sup>78</sup>

Of particular note is the phrase, “Mrs. Rowson's celebrity of her pen has been acknowledged by all the literary reviewers of the old world.” Here we see the use of the term “celebrity” invoked in reference to Rowson and it is associated with her success in Britain (the “old world” in the reference), solidifying her position as a cultural celebrity and diplomat. Not surprisingly, this same edition of the newspaper also carried an advertisement for performances of *Slaves in Algiers* on its second page, ending with the timely and rather patriotic cry (and at the same time suggesting the political nature of Rowson's work) of *Vivat Republica!*<sup>79</sup>

The main action in *Slaves in Algiers* revolves around the Barbary Coast pirates and the enslavement of American citizens by pirates of the North African States. Rowson's subject was thus a popular contemporary issue that citizens of Philadelphia would have discussed in coffee houses and on the street. What better place to gather a disparate group of concerned citizens together to discuss qualities of liberty and women's place in society than in the confines of the theatre. *Slaves in Algiers* did not just dramatize American valor in the sight of tyranny, it celebrated the strong role women played in moralizing such a change. The play's prologue

announces that, "tho' a woman," Rowson will "plead the rights of man."<sup>80</sup> *Slaves in Algiers* explicitly argues for the inclusion of women as rights-bearing subjects in the new nation. Yet even though the obvious focus of Rowson's play parallels political subjectivity in America, the play is completely outside of America and the action occurs in North Africa, rather than in North America. By placing power into her heroine's hands, Rowson presents a transgendered form of freedom and liberty (as voiced by several of the female characters in her play, including the Muslim woman, Fetnah). Yet Rowson's sense of freedom and liberty is placed not just in women's hands but within a global geography. One might even consider her play as prescient in examining the plight of Americans in the hands of Barbary Coast pirates as a precursor (somewhat hawkishly) to the First Barbary War (or Tripolitan War), the first of two wars fought between America and the Barbary States of Tripoli and Algiers (1801-1805). During this period America asserts itself as a naval power and as a country willing to unite under one cause and fight a war away from home.

The Algerian harem dweller named Fetnah, begins the play by commenting on what society believes women want; "Well, it's all vastly pretty, the gardens, the house and these fine clothes. I like them very well, but I don't like to be confined."<sup>81</sup> Immediately the audience is presented with the idea that while women might enjoy pretty things they didn't themselves want to *be* one of the pretty things confined and limited within male society. Yet because she is part of a harem, Fetnah's position in life *is* as a captive pretty thing. In addition, one of the American captives, a woman named Rebecca, becomes a missionary of republicanism and anti-slavery advocate to the North Africans who have taken her. *Slaves in Algiers* also touched a chord specifically amongst the inhabitants of Philadelphia, for in the new republic there were few discussions as pressing, and as fractious as that of slavery. And while Rowson's play discusses white slavery rather than black slavery, she concedes that any form of slavery is wrong. By play's end, Rebecca comments, "By the Christian law, no man should be a slave; it is a word so abject

that, but to speak it  
dyes the cheek with  
crimson. Let us assert  
our own prerogative,  
to be free ourselves,  
but let us not thrown  
on another's neck, the  
chains we scorn to  
wear."<sup>82</sup> When *Slaves*

*in Algiers* appeared  
onstage, Pennsylvania  
had actually passed a  
law for the gradual

emancipation of slavery fourteen years earlier in 1780, though change was slow and even by 1810 there were still 795 slaves residing in Pennsylvania. While Fetnah is not enslaved like Rebecca, she is not allowed her own freewill either and praises Rebecca's conviction and her teachings, "It was she who nourished in my mind the love of liberty, and taught me, woman was never formed to be the abject slave of man. She came from that land where virtue in either sex is the only mark of superiority.—She was an American."<sup>83</sup>

*Slaves in Algiers* made its premier performance at the Chestnut Street Theatre as Rowson's benefit night with the company's strongest actors taking lead roles. Rowson took the supporting role of Olivia, daughter of the heroine, Rebecca, while Rebecca was played by Kemble theatre heir Elizabeth Whitlock, a woman with enough star power likely to do the role justice (and to make good in the box office). Rowson also spoke the Epilogue dressed in the costume of Olivia. *Slaves in Algiers* was well-received by the Philadelphia theater-going public

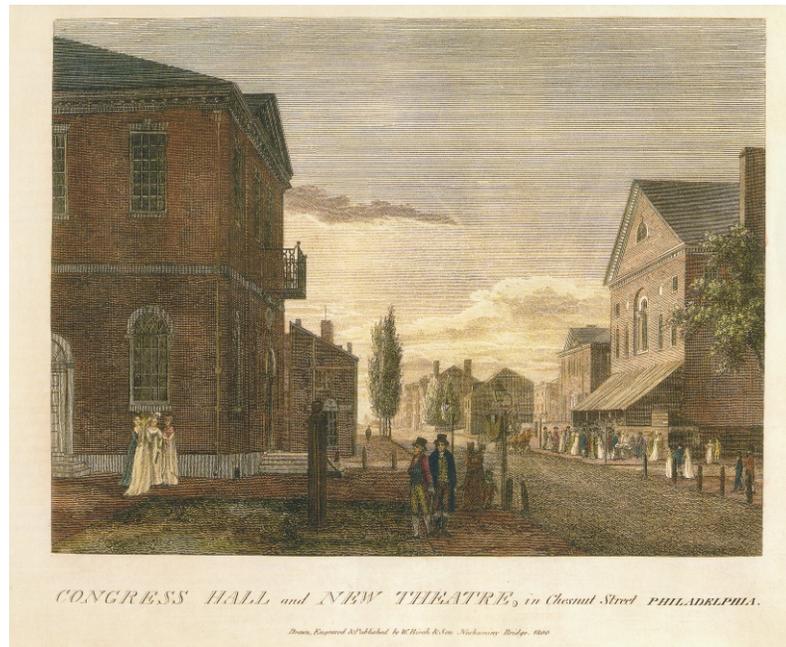


Figure 6.18 "Congress Hall and New Theatre, in Chestnut Street Philadelphia." Plate 20 from *The City of Philadelphia as it appeared in the Year 1800*. Published by W. Birch, Springland Cot. near Neshaminy Bridge on the Bristol Road; Pennsylvania. Dec. 31st 1800.

and during the next few years Rowson's play went on to be successfully performed in New York, Boston, Baltimore, Charleston, South Carolina; and Hartford, Connecticut.

Few plays of the period written by women lauded the idea of freedom so soundly as did *Slaves in Algiers*. Even if Rowson did not directly address racial slavery, she did present a complicated argument against slavery as an institution. The closing words of Rowson's play are shared by the young American hero and heroine, siblings Henry and Olivia (a role Rowson played), separated by their respective captivities and now reunited following the Americans' victory over their Muslim captors. Henry speaks of returning to the United States, just as Pogson Smith's Henry had called to depart for America where the "true sons of liberty" dwelled. Rowson's character Henry claims America is "where liberty has established her court—where the warlike Eagle extends his glittering pinions in the sunshine of prosperity."<sup>84</sup> In response, his long-lost sister Olivia concludes, "Long, long may that prosperity continue—may Freedom spread her benign influence thro' every nation, till the bright Eagle, united with the dove and the olive branch, waves high, the acknowledged standard of the world."<sup>85</sup> Thus not only did Rowson write the play, she spoke the play's final lines as the character Olivia (referencing the olive branch of peace). She is, onstage the last one to sing America's praises. Not only that, Rowson returned to give the play's Epilogue, still dressed as Olivia, giving her the opportunity to represent herself as author, character, epilogue narrator, American, and woman. This blurring of fantasy with reality, and various characters with their creator suggests just how complicated and Anglophone theatre was at the end of the eighteenth century and what a powerful and empowering moment it must have been for Rowson.

On Thursday, 1 January 1795 the four-page *Aurora General Advertiser* in Philadelphia placed the following advertisement at the bottom right-hand corner of its third page: "SLAVES IN ALGIERS This Day Is Published, Price one Quarter of a Dol'ar. Inscribed to the Citizens of the United States of North America. SLAVES IN ALGIERS, OR, A STRUGGLE FOR

FREEDOM. A Play, in three acts, interspersed with Songs, by Mrs. Rowson: as performed at the New Theatres in Philadelphia and Baltimore. Sold by M. Carey, W. & P. Rice and all the booksellers in Philadelphia, December 17.”<sup>86</sup> Sandwiched between an advertisement for a French language school for ladies and gentlemen given at the tutor’s home and a meeting of the Democratic Society at the University with a reminder of those planning to attend to be punctual, this brief advertisement for Susanna Rowson’s play could have been easily overlooked. Yet within this twelve-line advertisement containing just over fifty words much can be said about American culture, American theatre, Susanna Rowson and even the role of women in American theatre at the very beginning of 1795. Rowson’s play was again advertised in the paper on 2 January 1795, this time in the first column on the first page, the same twelve lines quietly printed between an advertisement for a French language school, a limner’s request for business, and the sale of a “valuable plantation” containing approximately 225 acres of “very good land well improved.”<sup>87</sup> For eighteen cents, interested readers could purchase a copy of George Keatinge’s (d. 1811?) *The Folly of Reason* and for a half dollar, twice the price of Rowson’s play, readers could purchase a third edition copy of James Thomson Callender’s (1758-1803) *The Political Progress of Britain Or an Impartial History of the Abuses in the Government of the British Empire from 1688 to the Present Time*,” in which Callender estimated the cost of the American War for Britain at 139,171,876 pounds sterling.<sup>88</sup> Readers could also purchase, for the price of twenty-five cents (1760-1852) Jean-Baptiste Chemin-Dupontes’ (1761?-1852) *Morality of the Sans Coulottes or Republican Gospels*, translated from the French.<sup>89</sup> For seventy-five cents readers could buy Thomas Paine’s (1737-1809) recently published pamphlet *The Age of Reason* (in contrast to the previously advertised *The Folly of Reason*), or pay the high price of one dollar for Rabaut Saint-Etienne’s moderate French revolutionary views of contemporary events in France in his *History of the French Revolution* (1792).<sup>90</sup>

In looking more closely at the various advertisements, it is interesting to note that the price of Susanna Rowson's play, *Slaves in Algiers* was in keeping with the price of other texts of similar length and importance available for purchase at that time. At twenty-five cents per copy, Rowson's play could easily be purchased for the amusement of readers in Philadelphia. *Slaves in Algiers* was not the least expensive publication, nor was it even close to being the most expensive. Secondly, Rowson, a former resident of England who had only recently relocated to America might have needed to prove her new allegiance to America by inscribing her play "to the Citizens of the United States of North America." Whether this was Rowson's decision or her publisher's, Matthew Carey's, decision, the inscription of her play to American citizens (not including women, slaves, or other underrepresented residents) would have appealed to local readers. In fact this appeal would have likely won her some readers who might have been worried about purchasing a play written not just by a woman but by a British woman. Thirdly, *Slaves in Algiers* was advertised as having been "performed at the New Theatres in Philadelphia and Baltimore," most recently in Philadelphia on 22 December 1794 just a week prior to publication of the newspaper, provided another level of legitimacy of Rowson's play for American audiences and readers. Publications of plays that were performed successfully in local theatres were also likely to be more appealing to local readers. In addition, the publication in the newspaper of the play's full title, *Slaves in Algiers, or; The Struggle for Freedom* would have immediately appealed to many American readers then in the throes of defining and being defined by Republicanism and literature focused on themes of liberty and freedom were much more likely to have appeal to the citizens of Philadelphia, the new temporary capitol of the United States.

Matthew Carey, Rowson's publisher, clearly marketed *Slaves in Algiers* with an eye toward sales. Rowson was already a successful novelist in Britain; Carey would have seen her potential to sell books and make a tidy profit if her works were thoughtfully marketed. Lastly, and most importantly on the third page of the 2 January 1795 edition of the *Aurora General*

*Advertiser* were listed the names of fourteen Americans who had died in Algerian captivity between 1 January 1794 and 1 August 1794. The article cites each individual's name, the ports from where these individuals departed and the dates of their deaths, while also announcing that one hundred captives still remained in Algerian pirate custody.<sup>91</sup> Certainly the idea of Americans in the custody of Algerians was an important and present concern to Philadelphian residents with at least five of the listed dead captives leaving from Philadelphia ports.

Yet while Rowson's play espoused anti-slavery sentiments, slavery was still alive in America, even in Philadelphia. On the fourth page of this edition of the *Aurora General Advertiser* was a clear reminder of the presence of slavery with the advertisement of a twenty-dollar reward for the return of a runaway, a "Mulatto East-India boy named CRISPIN" and a thirty dollar reward (fifteen dollars each person) for information leading to the apprehension and return of two deserters from a Danish ship, men by the names of Christopher Callipon and Peter Christopher Hesler.<sup>92</sup> In spite of the American Revolution fought over the high ideals of freedom and liberty, racial slavery existed in Philadelphia in spite of the passage of the Gradual Abolition of Slavery Act in Pennsylvania in 1780. While many Philadelphia residents frowned upon the institution of slavery, and most residents had switched over to hiring indentured servants by 1795, it was still legal to own slaves. In addition to the advertisements about returning runaway slaves, public announcements condemning women's acts also appeared. Alongside the runaway slave advertisements was a notice that one Martha Gamble was given an "Alias subpoena...to answer the Libel" of her husband James Gamble "praying for a divorce from the bands of Matrimony."<sup>93</sup> Each of these announcements further reinforces the importance of Rowson's play and how concepts of freedom and liberty were certainly challenged in contemporary society.<sup>94</sup> Certainly none of these four persons advertised in the *Aurora General Advertiser* were considered citizens in America in 1795 because of their race or gender, and their public shaming suggests that even in Philadelphia, ideals of the American Revolution fell short in protecting an individual's rights and

even punished individuals who attempted to claim those rights outside of the bounds of social acceptance.

Although she was born and lived several years in England, it was in America that Rowson was ultimately recognized for her talent and her republican spirit, and Rowson was one of the first women to publish comments about the American Revolution. Her views of America and of the American Revolution and her hopes for the position of women in this New Republic were framed by her own personal experiences. Because of her first-hand experience with the Revolution, Rowson's writings offer key insights into how women viewed and interpreted historical events like war, as well as how they influenced and were influenced by important contemporary issues. Having removed herself from England to America in 1793, Rowson found freedom and acceptance in American theatres as an author that was not available to her under the British Theatre Licensing Act.<sup>95</sup> Certainly Rowson's play is a complicated political piece. It is anti-Semitic, and ignores parallels of the imprisoned "white slaves" in Algiers and the African slaves in America. Yet it also suggests that freedom and liberty for (white) Americans is without gender. Indeed, she even suggests (perhaps tongue-in-cheek, perhaps not) in her *Epilogue* that "Women were born for universal sway; / Men to adore, be silent, and obey."<sup>96</sup> For Rowson, cultural diplomacy took root in her conviction best represented in words spoken both by her as author and by her in character as Olivia, "may Freedom spread her benign influence thro' every nation, till the bright Eagle united with the dove and olive-branch, waves high, the acknowledged standard of the world."<sup>97</sup> Using theatre as a mechanism through which to proclaim America's superiority, Rowson has women serve as the highest form of cultural diplomats in proclaiming Freedom should be the standard of the world.

### **Conclusions**

The successful experiences and influences of early Anglophone actresses and women playwrights allowed women to become more publicly vocal about political and social issues. By the 1790s, Anglophone women living and working transatlantically used the stage as a place where social and political engagement could take place, and where they could proselytize their views while reinforcing cultural connections between classes, between cultures, and between countries. The majority of women playwrights now published plays under their own names, and women who published in America were no longer subjected to British censorship laws. Actresses by the 1790s performing throughout the transatlantic world, often earned salaries similar to male actors and commanded equal if not greater public adoration. Additionally, women's involvement with Anglophone theatre continued to provide the public with a relatively class- and gender-neutral environment, by the end of the eighteenth century, women publicly addressed political and social conflicts overtly,

By examining three plays by three women who experienced the late eighteenth-century transatlantic world very differently we see how place, period, and perspective shaped what they wrote. Elizabeth Inchbald's world was Britain-focused. While the American Revolution seemed to have little influence on what Inchbald wrote or performed, her fears concerning the French Revolution were real and rested in the fact that France and Britain shared similar customs, attitudes, and cultural interests. Inchbald was approximately thirty years old and had been performing onstage for about ten years when the American Revolution concluded in 1783 and approximately forty years old when the French Revolution began. After the unexpected death of her husband, Joseph, in 1779, Inchbald joined the Covent Garden Theatre in 1780, and her first play was produced in 1784. By 1792, when she wrote *The Massacre*, Inchbald had seen the successful production of at least eleven of her plays in London. She was on all accounts, culturally active, politically engaged, publicly acknowledged, and financially successful.

And she was also afraid. Both the French and American Revolutions altered the course of history and yet they did so through different means. The French Revolution and its violence differed from the American Revolution in its violence against citizens. While the American Revolution might be seen as an elitist movement formed by intellectuals dreaming of a republican government based on Roman principles, the French Revolution was a movement of the people, various factions of people, that overthrew the monarchy, established a republic, thrived in spite of several violent political groups, and ultimately led to a dictatorship under Napoleon. During the violent changes taking place in France between 1789 and 1799, executions of average citizens took place on a profoundly disturbing scale with some estimates of upward of 17,000 people executed as different political parties struggled to gain and maintain power. Additionally disturbing was the fact that many of these executions were carried out in the name of new rights. No one felt safe and that fear made its way over to Britain where Britons, long accustomed to traveling and living abroad in France, saw the destruction of a way of life very familiar to them.

Because Britain's own political and social order was in question and because of a fear that France's "terror" might seep across the English Channel into England, it makes sense that Inchbald's reaction to the violence of the French Revolution resulted in a violent play where the real victims were the voiceless women and children. That she chose not to publish or produce her play based on its violent nature, but that she did "publish" her work privately by circulating it to friends suggests she understood the power of her work. Sharing it with those closest to her allowed her to continue this important social and political conversation. Through *The Massacre*, therefore, Inchbald worked as a cultural diplomat in bringing to the fore important discussions about mob violence, female agency, the destruction of property, the importance of female voice and the need for women to be able to defend and protect themselves. While these events took place in France, it was clear that political and social unrest in Britain influenced Inchbald's desire to bring her work into the (albeit limited) public realm.

Sarah Pogson Smith also felt the ramifications of revolution that resulted from both the American and French conflicts that in turn led to the violent and racially charged Haitian Revolution (1791-1804). Pogson Smith would have felt threatened both because she was white and because she was female. The highly successful but bloody anti-slavery, anti-colonial uprising that began as a massive black insurgency against white plantation owners set a precedent for revolt against a racialized slave system. In 1789, Saint-Domingue was the richest Caribbean island, producing 60% of the world's coffee and 40% of the sugar imported by France. However, the population of the island was highly imbalanced. The white population in Saint-Domingue was only 32,000 compared with the black population of 452,000 and a free black and mixed race population of approximately 28,000. In fact the slave population totaled almost one half of the slave population in all of the Caribbean in 1789.<sup>98</sup>

During this violent period of black insurgency against white plantation owners, white plantation owners fled to America, many of them immigrating to South Carolina where Pogson Smith eventually lived. Influenced both by her own experiences and those of white plantation owners who fled from the slave uprising and violence in Saint-Domingue, as well as the continued fear that slaves in America would follow suit and rise up against their masters, Pogson Smith wrote a play seemingly distant from this world. Yet the mob violence, the fear of uprisings, and the sense of a loss of control of a political and social system are inherent in her work and reflect the volatile Revolutionary period. The violence in *The Female Enthusiast* is palpable, and Charlotte Corday emerges as a controversial heroine at a time when America was attempting to define its identity both to itself and to the world. As Zoe Detsi-Diamati suggests, "Corday's murderous act underlined the already existing socio-political conflicts, brought about by the age of democratic revolutions, and added to the general sense of insecurity and anxiety at the rapid and somewhat unpredictable social changes on an international level."<sup>99</sup> Revolutions altered the way women thought and how they reacted. Like Inchbald's play, Pogson Smith's play reflects the

violence and uncertainty in the world around her, and the “honorable” characters who emerge from the violence—and those who are sacrificed to it—are complicated characters whose ideals do not always fit within their reality.

Susanna Rowson, more than Inchbald or Pogson Smith, experienced Revolution first-hand. As a political prisoner and refugee, Rowson witnessed the murder of soldiers, saw her own family taken prisoner, was forced to leave her adopted country, and had to reinvent herself once the life she knew was taken away from her. Perhaps having to reinvent herself so many times made her transition to theatre natural—and perhaps it made travel necessary in order to be a successful performer. Through the characters she portrayed onstage and the characters she invented in her plays, Rowson could imagine a different world for herself and for her female characters. While her play presents informed discussions about freedom, liberty, and republican idealism, her characters are not on American soil, but held captive in a distant country. By setting her play in Algiers away from America, Rowson presents two important claims. First, regardless of where you are in the world, American republican ideology rings true and is applicable within any social and political system. Second, Rowson suggests that while women can and should be involved in publicly upholding and espousing these American ideals, it was only possible in 1794 to do so outside of America. Even though America had enacted great civic and social changes, women were still challenged for their public voices and considered non-citizens in these discussions. By the turn of the nineteenth century, Anglophone women were in the midst of a socially and politically fraught transatlantic world that had witnessed three major, world-changing Revolutions. War, or the possibility of war, still threatened to rear its ugly head between Britain and America by century’s end, and women continued to observe and record contemporary events that reflected this continued uncertainty.

Just as they had from the beginning, women involved with theatre continued to address contemporary struggles, to suggest women’s roles within these new social orders, and to

reestablish cultural connections between groups. Invoking their celebrity status as performers and authors to legitimize their commentaries, women during the last decade of the eighteenth century publicly engaged with the darker forces at play in the world. As Ellen Donkin writes, “cultural and economic resistance to women *creating* meaning by becoming playwrights continued long after it became acceptable for women to *carry* meaning onstage as performers.”<sup>100</sup> To this end, it seems appropriate to look at something else that Elizabeth Inchbald and Susanna Rowson each wrote to understand how these women saw themselves as powerful, creative, and informed intellectual citizens of their world. The Prologue to Inchbald’s *Everyone Has His Fault* (1793) comments on the power of women to speak and write, think and fight on equal ground with men;

Our Author, who accuses great and small,  
And says so boldly, there are faults in all;  
Sends me with dismal voice, and lengthen’d phiz,  
Humbly to own one dreadful fault of *his*:  
A fault, in modern Authors not uncommon,  
It is,—now don’t be angry—He’s—*a woman*.  
Can you forgive it?...

*The Rights of Women*, says a female pen,  
Are, to do every thing as well as Men.  
To think, to argue, to decide, to write,  
To talk, undoubtedly—perhaps to fight.  
[For Females march to war, like brave Commanders,  
Not in old Authors only—but in Flanders.]  
I grant this matter may be strain’d too far,  
And Maid ‘gainst Man is most uncivil war:  
I grant, as all my City friends will say,  
That Men should rule, and Women should obey.<sup>101</sup>

In like manner, Susanna Rowson’s poem “The Rights of Woman,” published in 1804 asserts,

*“While Patriots on wide philosophic plan,  
Declaim upon the wondrous rights of man,  
May I presume to speak? And though uncommon,  
Stand forth the champion of the rights of woman?  
Nay, start not, gentle sirs; indeed ’tis true,  
And if she’s wise, she will assert them too.”*<sup>102</sup>

Clearly these women believed that they not only had the power to persuade audiences that women had rights, they had the social responsibility to act as cultural arbiters of these truths.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> See William Prynne, *Histriomatrix: The Player's Scourge, or Actors Tragedy*. "Some Frenchwomen, or monsters...in 1629, attempted to act a French play at the Blackfriars play-house, an impudent, shameful, unwomanish, graceless, if not more than wantonish attempt."

<sup>2</sup> While little is known about Pogson Smith's life, much more information is available about Inchbald and Rowson. Both were notable actresses who became prominent celebrities, successful playwrights, and best-selling novelists. They also wrote important works of non-fiction; Inchbald's critic of theatre and drama remains an important source for theatre historians and Rowson's texts were used effectively in teaching young women.

<sup>3</sup> Rowson played the role of Olivia, and appeared in costume at the end of the play to speak the Epilogue. She took advantage of the widespread contemporary interest in these kidnappings to suggest that liberty could be transgendered and that women were equally important upholders of liberty. Susanna Rowson, *Slaves in Algiers: or, A Struggle for Freedom*, (Philadelphia: Wrigley and Berriman, no. 149 Chestnut Street, 1794), Dedication.

<sup>4</sup> Inchbald's work directly addresses the horrors of the French Revolution, but also was likely to offer a more personal (and much closer to home) critique of Jacobin and anti-Jacobin positions in England.

<sup>5</sup> Marion Rust argues that Rowson serves as an important symbol of female authorship during the last decade of the eighteenth century because she is represented "as an exemplar of virtuous womanhood and a harpy. Studying her public reputation, one can learn a great deal about how vilification and reverence functioned interdependently in the construction of early American female authorship, despite all attempts to segregate authors according to which of these two attitudes they inspired." Significantly, Rust argues about the importance of examining Rowson in helping to establish a national identity by Anglo-Americans; "Since female authors exemplified a national female persona, this destabilization extends to the expectations held for early Anglo-American women more generally. And since this female persona...plays a crucial role in the construction of national identity, the transatlantic ironically serves to reveal the conflicted and chimerical nature of national identity even as [Rowson] remains central to its formation." Marion Rust, *Prodigal Daughters: Susanna Rowson's Early American Women* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 120.

<sup>6</sup> Joy Wiltenburg argues that beginning in the early modern period women began to respond to feelings of repression and antagonism through writing in order to attempt to change their future and assert some control. Joy Wiltenburg, *Disorderly Women and Female Power in the Street Literature of Early Modern England and Germany* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1992). Gerda Lerner, examining women writers from the early modern period through the nineteenth century, suggests that women playwrights struggled to emancipate their ideas and beliefs under the rule of patriarchal society. Further, because women were not part of a dominant group and identified as subordinates within society, writing helped them to create a bond between women in order for them to posit a different future. Lerner's female consciousness, and thus the consciousness of these early Anglophone women playwrights, was socially aware and envisioned change as a possibility. Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness: From the Middle Ages to Eighteen-Seventy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>7</sup> Women's familiarity with theatre made it an easy platform from which to voice their views. By the 1790s, the political world and the social structure in which Anglophone women had been writing and performing had also changed significantly, making their use of the stage for political and social commentary natural. On the other side of the Atlantic from Britain, the American Revolution had resolved itself into the formation of the United States of America as a free and independent country. English censorship no longer resided in America and public discussions of how to define liberty for all of its citizens were daily contested. Just across the English Channel from England, France was embroiled in its own political and

social revolution. England watched with particular interest in the outcome of France's internal political struggle, knowing that how France ultimately resolved its conflicts might influence England's own political and social fabric. Not surprisingly, women's plays and performances during this later period reflected the myriad political and social conflicts. Just as they had from the beginning of their involvement with theatre, women used their influence on the public to address contemporary struggles, to suggest women's roles within these new social orders, and to reestablish cultural connections between groups. Invoking their celebrity status as performers and authors to legitimize their commentaries, women during the last decade of the eighteenth century publicly engaged with the darker forces at play in the world.

<sup>8</sup> Ashley M. DeCarli, *Theatre and Cultural Diplomacy: The Role of Performing Arts in How Nations Deal with Each Other*, Master's Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, June 2010, v.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> A number of women playwrights writing during the Romantic Period were involved with translating plays for the London stage including Elizabeth Craven (1750-1828), Anne Gittins Francis (1738-1800), Hannah Brand (? – 1821), Marie Therese deCamp Kemble (1775-1836), and Elizabeth Inchbald.

<sup>11</sup> Marc Baer, *Theatre and Disorder in Late Georgian London* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1992), 11.

<sup>12</sup> Elizabeth Inchbald, as quoted in Catherine B. Burroughs, *Closet Stages: Joanne Baillie and the Theater Theory of British Romantic Women Writers* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), 86.

<sup>13</sup> Elizabeth Inchbald, as quoted in Burroughs, *Closet Stages*, 86.

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

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 36.

<sup>16</sup> Tracy C. Davis, "Private Women and the Public Realm," *Theatre Survey*, Vol. 35, Issue 01, May 1994, 65-71.

<sup>17</sup> Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, trans. Janet Lloyd (New York: Zone Books, 1988), 32-33.

<sup>18</sup> During the French Revolution, British citizens themselves were split between Jacobin and anti-Jacobin positions, with Jacobins being associated with more radical, left-wing politics and with English citizens who supported the French Revolution, at least during its early stages and before the Reign of Terror (5 September 1793-28 July 1794). Jacobins were opposed to extravagance, championed the end of slavery believed in strong central government, and were more associated with the middle class and the sans-culottes, a popular working-class force in Paris.

<sup>19</sup> James Boaden (1762-1839), a playwright himself, wrote biographies of contemporary actresses and playwrights. In 1827 he wrote *Life of Mrs. Siddons* and in 1831 *Life of Mrs. Jordan*, before he compiled Elizabeth Inchbald's biography in 1833.

<sup>20</sup> Elizabeth Inchbald, *The Massacre*, eds., Thomas C. Crochunis and Michael Eberle-Sinatra, with an Introduction by Danny O'Quinn. *British Women Playwrights around 1800*, 15 April 1999; 1-14; Advertisement.

<sup>21</sup> Inchbald, *The Massacre*. Advertisement.

<sup>22</sup> Chris Arnot, Theatre Blog, *The Guardian*, "Playwright Elizabeth Inchbald: a clear voice amid the mob," 15 June 2009. <http://www.theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2009/jun/15/playwright-elizabeth-inchbald-bury-theatre-royal>; accessed December 2015.

<sup>23</sup> One of Inchbald's characters comments on the nature of the massacre of Paris; "I still hear the shrieks of my expiring friends, mingled with the furious shouts of their triumphant foes. I saw poor females, youths, and helpless infants try to ward off the last fatal blow, then sink beneath it—I saw aged men dragged by their white hairs; a train of children following to prevent their fate, and only rush upon their own. I saw

infants encouraged by the fury of their tutors, stab other infants sleeping in their cradles.” Inchbald adds a footnote here; “Shocking, even to incredibility, as these murderers may appear, the truth of them has been asserted in many of our public prints during the late massacre at Paris; and the same extravagant wickedness is attested to have been acted at the massacre of St. Bartholomew, by almost every historian of that time.” See Elizabeth Inchbald, *The Massacre*, 355.

<sup>24</sup> Wendy C. Nielsen, “A Tragic Farce: Revolutionary Women in Elizabeth Inchbald’s *The Massacre* and European Drama,” *European Romantic Review*, Vol. 17, Issue 3, 2006, 275-288; 275.

<sup>25</sup> Nielsen, “A Tragic Farce: Revolutionary Women in Elizabeth Inchbald’s *The Massacre* and European Drama,” 275.

<sup>26</sup> George C. Grinnell, “Timely Responses: Violence and Immediacy in Inchbald’s *The Massacre*” *European Romantic Review*, Vol. 24, Issue 6, 2013, 645-663; 645.

<sup>27</sup> The name Amédée is likely a derivative of the French *amander* to make amends, remedy, fix or improve though ironically, Amédée can do nothing to save Madame Tricastin from her fate.

<sup>28</sup> Davis, “Private Women and the Public Sphere,” 65.

<sup>29</sup> Inchbald, *The Massacre*, III, 2, 14.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Sarah Burdett argues that “Elizabeth Inchbald was an author of reformist sentiments” and was associated with other British radicals such as William Godwin and Thomas Holcroft. Inchbald write to Godwin presenting him with a copy of her play. See Sarah Burdett, “‘Feminine Virtues Violates’: Motherhood, Female Militancy and Revolutionary Violence in Elizabeth Inchbald’s *The Massacre*(1792),” *Dandelion, Graduate Arts Journal & Research Network*, Vol 5, Number 1 (Summer 2014), 2. Gary Kelly, in *The English Jacobin Novel, 1780-1805*, includes Inchbald with Godwin, Holcroft, and Charlotte Turner Smith (1749-1806) as Jacobin novelists. Jacobin novels were written at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries by radical Britons who supported the French Revolution. They believed that ideals of the French Revolution should be made accessible to the lower classes. Inchbald’s act of writing a play supporting women’s involvement in political and military violence suggests her desire to reach a wider audience, although her work was not performed or published at the encouragement of her friends, likely to protect her reputation. See Gary Kelly, *The English Jacobin Novel, 1780-1805* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976).

<sup>33</sup> Little is known about Sarah Pogson, or Sarah Pogson Smith. It is thought that she was born in Essex, England and immigrated to Charleston in either 1788 or 1793 (the dates on her gravestone are not clearly decipherable). She married Judge Peter Smith of New York and is thought to have lived with her sister in Charleston later in life. Pogson is buried in Charleston. It is not known for certain whether this play was performed, but it is likely that *The Female Enthusiast* was performed in Charleston as the manager of the Charleston Theatre encouraged new plays by local writers and it was also published singly, not in a collection. For more on Pogson, see Amelia Howe Kritzer, ed., *Plays by Early American Women, 1775-1850* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 18-20.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> See *Cambridge Companion to American Women Playwrights*, ed. Brenda Murphy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 10. See also *Transatlantic Feminisms in the Age of Revolution*, eds., Lisa L. Moore, Joanna Brooks, Caroline Wigginton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 350.

<sup>37</sup> Unlike Rowson's comedy-drama, Pogson Smith placed the action of her comedy in dual settings of South Carolina and Algeria, creating a parallel view of slavery, forced labor, and bondage experienced by both the white Carolinians in Algeria and the black Carolina slaves in America.

<sup>38</sup> *The Young Carolinians* was published twenty-four years after Rowson's play, although under the increasing shadow of contentious national anti-slavery conversations and during a period of America's assertion of its own emerging national character, just a handful of years after the War of 1812.

<sup>39</sup> Sarah Pogson Smith, *The Female Enthusiast: A Tragedy in Five Acts*, (Charleston, Printed for the author by J. Hoff, No. 6 Broad Street, 1870) as printed in Amelia Howe Kritzer, ed., *Plays by Early American Women, 1775-1850* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 139.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 147.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 140.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 154.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 139-140.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 140.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 143.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 143.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 143.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 161.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 181.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 181.

<sup>51</sup> Mrs. R. K. Van Alstine, *Charlotte Corday* (London: W.H. Allen & Co., 1890), 137-138.

<sup>52</sup> Thomas Carlyle, *The French Revolution: A History* (1837), Volume III: The Guillotine Book, Terror Chapter 3.4.1 Charlotte Corday. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1301/1301-h/1301-h.htm> accessed 4 December 2015.

<sup>53</sup> Carlyle, *The French Revolution*.

<sup>54</sup> Rust, *Prodigal Daughters*, 38.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Judith Sargeant Murray was born in Gloucester, Massachusetts in 1751. She became a strong advocate for female education and called for women to have a public voice, including writing for the theatre. Once Boston lifted its ban on theatre, Murray wrote her first play, *The Medium, of Happy Tea-Party* (renamed *The Medium, of Virtue Triumphant*). It was performed at Boston's Federal Street Theatre, built in 1794. Her play was likely the first play written by an "American" that was performed in this theatre. Murray followed this play with another a year later called, *The Traveller Returned* (1796). This play is set in a coastal city (a place like Boston) during the last year of the American Revolution. Both plays present post-Revolutionary ideas of American citizenship, virtue and strong female characters. One of Murray's most important works, a collection of essays and two plays titled *The Gleaner* (1798), discusses the new republic, citizenship, virtue, women's equality, education and economic independence. This work established Judith Sargent Murray as a leading author and intellect in the New Republic. Certainly the environment in which she was writing, one concerned with fostering an emerging American voice, allowed for Murray to write, publish, and be recognized publicly for her feminist arguments. Murray wrote a third play, *The African*, a copy of which has never been found. Like her contemporary, Susanna Haswell

Rowson, Murray saw the importance of the education of young women and eventually founded her own female academy in Massachusetts (1802). Rowson was born in England, lived her early years near Boston, was forced to return to England when her father was accused of being sympathetic to the British Monarchy, and returned to America in 1793. She was governess for the Duchess of Devonshire's children, married a part-time actor, William Rowson, and supported the family on her theatre and writing successes.

<sup>58</sup> Rust, *Prodigal Daughters*, 118-119.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 117.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 119.

<sup>61</sup> Nason, *Memoir of Mrs. Susanna Rowson*, 64-65.

<sup>62</sup> Rowson, *Rebecca; or the Fille de Chambre*, 120.

<sup>63</sup> Philip Duval is also potentially Philip Deval. More on this can be found in Parker, *Susanna Rowson*, 7-8.

<sup>64</sup> Rowson incorporated these moments, like many of her experiences, into her novels, believing they were too important to forget. She became one of the first female novelists to write about the American Revolution. In 1792 she wrote about its early days in her novel *Rebecca*, first published in London. Rowson, *Rebecca; or the Fille de Chambre*, 164-165.

<sup>65</sup> The year 1793 was an interesting year for Wignell to solicit for actors in England, Ireland and Scotland to join his acting company. Philadelphia had recently become the capitol of the newly independent United States. As such, the idea of developing "American" culture to the level of international acclaim had some appeal. Wignell believed that bringing British talent to the American stage would result in monetary success, but even more, he believed that bringing British actors to Philadelphia (especially in light of the new and rather ironic American love for all things British) would legitimize theatre in America. Considering the vast array of talented actors and actresses he managed to attract to Philadelphia, and the ongoing success of the theatre itself (it managed to remain economically viable unlike many London theatres), Wignell was right in his assessment of a newfound American appreciation for theatre. Perhaps even more importantly, Wignell brought to America some remarkably talented actresses who had for the most part been overlooked in Britain, women who became celebrities of the American stage and who helped to legitimize American theatre by the end of the eighteenth century. The Chestnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia was just then being completed and Wignell, a cousin of Lewis Hallam, Jr., and a one-time member of the American Company, was excited to begin this new venture as theatre manager. Thomas Wignell and Alexander Reinagle (1756-1809) took on this venture together, producing over seventy-five productions with Philadelphia's New Company as they were called. Reinagle composed the music; one of his great admirers was George Washington, for whom Reinagle composed a "Chorus" that was performed on Washington's journey to his first inauguration. Reinagle would also work with Susanna Rowson, writing music for several of her plays including *The Volunteers*, again one of Washington's favorite productions. Also in 1793, the rest of Europe was sitting on the edges of their seats watching neighboring France. France was currently in the throes of their political turmoil including the regicide of King Louis XVI on 21 January. While many British citizens sympathized with the plight of the French citizenry, they were also stunned by the horrific turn of events that led to the beheading of the French King. In fact the events in France even disrupted the London theatre reinforcing the political nature of theatre, even plays written by women. For example the first performance of Elizabeth Inchbald's tragic-comedy, *Every One Has His Fault* (1793) was delayed from its premier performance at London's Theatre Royal Covent Garden, shifting from 23 January to 29 January 1793 in anticipation of the French king's beheading.

<sup>66</sup> *Charlotte Temple*, as *Charlotte* was eventually known after publication of its third American edition, went on to become the most popular American novel until publication of Harriet Beecher Stowe's anti-slavery novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852).

<sup>67</sup> See Melissa J. Homestead and Camryn Hansen, “Susanna Rowson's Transatlantic Career” *Early American Literature*, Vol. 45, No. 3 (2010), 619-654. (See 620-621 in particular).

<sup>68</sup> Cobbett, like Rowson, was a recent immigrant to the United States, having arrived in the early 1790s. He wrote under the name “Peter Porcupine” and his work took particular aim at Rowson’s praise of women.

<sup>69</sup> William S. Cobbett, *A Kick for a Bite; or Review Upon Review, with a Critical Essay on the works of S. Rowson*, (Philadelphia: Printed for the Purchasers, 1795), 23. Rowson was not without her defenders. In 1796, Poet and writer John Swanwick (1740-1798) defended Rowson in a rebuttal to Cobbett’s comments in *A Rub for a Snub*.

<sup>70</sup> Pierce W. Gaines, *William Cobbett and the United States, 1792-1835* (Worcester, MA, 1971), xvii.

<sup>71</sup> Rust, *Prodigal Daughters*, 123.

<sup>72</sup> Rust posits, “Cobbett invoked Rowson’s outspoken presence in the public realm and her semi-comic claims to female superiority to suggest both a sluttishness and a monstrously inappropriate masculinity on the part of professionally active American women—a form of cultural degradation that her readers mistook for national progress.” Rust, *Prodigal Daughters*, 130.

<sup>73</sup> Cobbett, *Peter Porcupine in America*, ed. Wilson, 128.

<sup>74</sup> Rust, *Prodigal Daughters*, 130.

<sup>75</sup> The building of a new permanent theatre in Philadelphia occurred relatively quickly for the period, first conceived of in 1791 and finished by the season in 1793. The theatre was the brainchild of actor Thomas Wignell, who had come to odds with members of the Old American Company, and theatre musician and composer Alexander Robert Reinagle (1756-1809), a man very much adored in Philadelphia society. These men first developed the idea after a public meeting to set up stock options and details for the building and management of the theatre. Wignell left for London to engage a company of actors, British-born and trained actors being considered the only proper company to employ at the time. Reinagle remained in Philadelphia where he oversaw the actual building of the playhouse. As the world of the theatre was relatively small, it is not surprising to learn that Wignell’s brother-in-law, British landscape painter John Inigo Richards (1731-1810) and who worked as a scene painter in London theatres (1777-1803), provided plans for the New Theatre, which is likely based on the design of the Theatre Royal Bath. The stage ran seventy-one feet in length and thirty feet in width and could seat over two thousand people making it a rival to London’s Theatre Royal Drury Lane, which had recently undergone a complete transformation and could seat an amazing crowd of thirty-six hundred people. Theatre Royal Drury Lane likewise boasted a large stage that was eighty-three feet in length and a surprising ninety-two feet deep, the better to accommodate increasingly impressive theatrical shows. While the New Theatre in Philadelphia was certainly built in such a large scale with the hope of making theatre not only important in Philadelphia, but a profitable endeavor, theatres of such large sizes were criticized as lacking intimacy and as changing the style in which actors performed since audiences could no longer hear actors’ voices clearly, nor really could they see their expressions. Thus acting became even more exaggerated and the idea of spectacle performances became more popular. Certainly theatre managers and investors were driven to increase the size of theatres in order to pack in larger audiences and thus improve profits from dramatic ventures, but at what cost? With the building of large theatres such as Philadelphia’s New Theatre and London’s Theatre Royal Drury Lane, audiences could expect to see more dramatic productions (enhanced by recent improvements in technology such as lighting and pumping systems that allowed large quantities of water to become part of the staging), but at a distance. Actors and actresses become slightly less important as a physical presence onstage at this point, though by reputation, they still maintain audience draw. Large theatres meant theatre managers could experiment with popular new genres such as “gothic” style lately popular in novels, a genre that remained exceedingly popular with Anglophone audiences through the 1840s before transitioning into melodrama. While contemporary audiences sought out critical assessments of current events in theatres throughout the transatlantic Anglophone world, they also sought out entertainment. And no form of entertainment

appeared to be as completely and utterly devoid of intellectualism and social responsibility than gothic theatre.

<sup>76</sup> Opera-singer Miss Broadhurst, appeared in thirty-eight roles with Wignell's company at the Chestnut Street Theatre during the same season, all in comic operas or comedies. Elizabeth Whitlock, the company's premier actress appeared in twenty-six roles, the majority of which were tragedies. Georgina Sides ("Miss George" at London's Drury Lane Theatre and "Mrs. Oldmixon" in America), who was to become one of America's premier tragic actresses, appeared in thirteen roles between May 14 and July 16, 1794; most of her roles were in comic operas or farces during this early period. Rowson's supporting roles between 19 February and 8 March included Letty in *The Dramatist*, Mrs. Tippet in David Garrick's tragedy, *The Lying Valet* (1767), "Servant as Statue" in Isaac Bickerstaff's comic opera *Love in a Village* (1762), Lucy in Richard Steel and Joseph Addison's *The Guardian* (1714), "Toilet" in George Colman the Elder's *The Jealous Wife* (1761), Kitty in Carlo Goldoni's comedy, *The Liar* (1750), and Miss Tickle in Isaac Bickerstaff's farce, *The Spoiled Child* (1787/1792), Mrs. Placid in one of Elizabeth Inchbald's nineteen comedies, the tragic-comedy *Every One Has His Fault* (1793), a play that had debuted in London's Covent Garden Theatre just one year before on 29 January 1793. Rowson took on the role of Mrs. Scout in the farce *The Village Lawyer* (pub. 1795), and as Mrs. Placid again in Inchbald's highly popular play *Every One Has His Fault* on 8 March 1793.

<sup>77</sup> The popularity of her plays is also suggested by the fact that one of her plays, *The Volunteers* (1795), a musical entertainment based on Pennsylvania's Whiskey Rebellion of January 1795, was attended by none other than President George Washington and Martha Washington.

<sup>78</sup> *The Philadelphia Gazette and Universal Daily Advertiser*, Monday, June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1774, Vol. XI, No. 1777, 3.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*, 2.

<sup>80</sup> Susanna Rowson, *Slaves in Algiers; or, A Struggle for Freedom* (Copley Publishing Group: Acton, Massachusetts, 2000), 9.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*, 13.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*, 73.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, 17.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*, 74.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid*, 75.

<sup>86</sup> *Aurora General Advertiser*, Philadelphia, PA, 1 January 1795, 3.

<sup>87</sup> Rowson's play was advertised in the same place in the newspaper on 3 January 1795 as well. On page 3 of the *Aurora General Advertiser* for 3 January 1795, a short notice on the fighting in the Caribbean stated that "Two hundred and sixty mulattoes have just arrived [to Philadelphia], and were confined on board the *Reparateur* [prison ship at Kingston in Jamaica]; these men, after having set fire to St. Domingo, were cruel enough at Leogane to whip the white women. Their ferocity makes me tremble with horror." Susanna Rowson would have been aware of these events and such contemporary conversations would have both reinforced the content of her writings and likely helped sales of her play, *Slaves in Algiers*. See *Aurora General Advertiser*, Philadelphia, PA, 3 January 1795, 1 and *Aurora General Advertiser*, Philadelphia, PA, 2 January 1795, 1. The Algerian captivities had long flavored news in America. On Thursday, 9 November 1786, the *Maryland Gazette* published an article from a gentleman in Lisbon to a correspondent in Alexandria, Virginia, that stated, "Several American ships have lately arrived here from America within a few days past, without receiving any damage from the Algerians. Indeed no Algerine cruiser has been seen on this coast this year, owing to the Portuguese men of war and frigates being very vigilant in their cruises off this coast, consequently I apprehended no danger See *The Maryland Gazette*, 9 November 1786 (No.

2078), 2; <http://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc4800/sc4872/001283/html/m1283-1328.html>, accessed on 18 January 2014.

<sup>88</sup> *Aurora General Advertiser*, Philadelphia, PA, 1 January 1795, 4. See George Keatinge, *Being our perfect and unerring guide, to the knowledge of true religion: In answer to The Age of Reason, or An investigation of true and of fabulous theology. By Thomas Paine, author of works entitled, "Common sense, Rights of man," &c.* (Baltimore: Printed by Tiebout and O'Brien, for G. Keatinge's book-store), 1794. iv, [1], 6-23, [1]; (12mo). See also James Thomson Callender, *The Political Progress of Britain Or an Impartial History of the Abuses in the Government of the British Empire from 1688 to the Present Time* (Philadelphia: Printed by and for Richard Folwell, 1795), 11.

<sup>89</sup> Jean-Baptiste Chemin-Dupontes, *Morality of the Sans-Culottes of Every Age, Sex, Country, and Condition; or The Republican Gospel* (Philadelphia: Printed by Thomas Dobson, at the stone-house, no 41, South Second-Street. 1794).

<sup>90</sup> *Aurora General Advertiser*, Philadelphia, PA, 1 January 1795, 4.

<sup>91</sup> Listed among the dead captives were Sam Milburn (Philadelphia, died 6 February 1794), Benjamin Wood (Portsmouth, died 6 February 1794), T. Furnace (Portsmouth, died 12 February 1794), John Abbot (Philadelphia, died 13 February 1794), R. Whitten (Rhode Island, died 24 April 1794), J. Rensfield (Haverhill, died 17 May 1794), Peter Bendix (New York, died 1 June 1794), C. J. McShane (Philadelphia, died 16 June 1794), Peter Loring (Philadelphia, died 1 July 1794), William Prior (Rhode Island, died 3? July 1794), Thomas Stofford (Newburyport, died 14 July 1794), J. Harman (Newburyport, died 16 July 1794), Nicholas Bot (Philadelphia, died 20 July 1794), D. Collins (New York, died 1 August 1794) and mate to captain Morse, from Haverhill, who was sick. See *Aurora General Advertiser*, Philadelphia, PA, 2 January 1795, 3.

<sup>92</sup> *Aurora General Advertiser*, Philadelphia, PA, 1 January 1795, 3. Philadelphia continued to have slaves in spite of its Gradual Abolition Act (1780). Slavery was problematic for the ten years during which Philadelphia was the new temporary capitol of the United States as residents such as George Washington argued that while they were temporary residents of Philadelphia, they remained citizens of other states and thus slave laws applied in Pennsylvania did not apply to them.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*, 4.

<sup>94</sup> In each case as the newspaper presents, in their efforts to escape servitude (though perhaps less obvious in the case of Martha Grimes) these individuals attempted to assert their own claims on freedom. The "mulatto" slave who was at least in part of white ancestry ran away. The men working on the Danish ship, possible as indentured servants, deserted their posts. The woman being sued for divorce may or may not have wanted separation from her husband. Yet each of these individuals was also being publicly shamed for their actions and their desires to rid themselves of whatever shackles they experienced in an effort to obtain a level of freedom the American colonies had fought for during the American Revolution.

<sup>95</sup> By 1794, when Rowson began acting at the Chestnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia, she also began writing plays and popular songs for the stage. In fact, Rowson was so popular as a lyricist that some of the most important musicians of the day (including Alexander Reinagle, partner to Thomas Wignell in the Chestnut Street Theatre, and Peter Van Hagen, who supplied arrangements and new music for comic operas and musicals) demanded her collaboration as lyricist. The popularity of her plays is also suggested by the fact that one of her plays, *The Volunteers* (1795), a musical entertainment based on Pennsylvania's Whiskey Rebellion of January 1795, was attended by none other than President George Washington and Martha Washington when he was there in residence. Rowson wrote at least seven plays, only one of which, *Slaves in Algiers*, is extant, though reviews and comments about the remaining plays suggest that she knew how to entertain and engage her audience. Contemporary critics such as William Dunlap may not have marveled over her acting abilities, but many did recognize Rowson's talent for writing.

<sup>96</sup> Rowson, *Slaves in Algiers*, 77.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, 72.

<sup>98</sup> Bonham C. Richardson, *The Caribbean in the Wider World, 1492–1992 A Regional Geography*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 166.

<sup>99</sup> Zoe Detsi-Diamanti, "Sarah Pogson's Female Enthusiast (1807) and American Republican Virtue," [http://www.theasa.net/images/contributor\\_uploads/PJAS\\_vol8\\_02.pdf](http://www.theasa.net/images/contributor_uploads/PJAS_vol8_02.pdf) 17.

<sup>100</sup> Donkin, *Getting into the Act*, 1.

<sup>101</sup> Elizabeth Inchbald, *Everyone Has His Fault: A Comedy, in Five Acts* (London: G. G. J. and J. Robinson, 1793), prologue.

<sup>102</sup> Susanna Rowson, "The Rights of Woman" published in *Miscellaneous Poems*, 1804.

## CONCLUSIONS

In 1758, French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) wrote a famous letter to mathematician Jean le Rond d'Alembert (1717-1783), questioning whether theatre could be morally or socially justified or in any way improve the human condition.<sup>1</sup> While he had much to say against theatre, Rousseau acknowledged the importance of women in its functioning; "Look through most contemporary plays," he wrote, "it is always a woman who knows everything, who teaches everything to men."<sup>2</sup> Rousseau was right in thinking that women had much to contribute both as instructors and as leaders within society, not only to the Francophone world, but also, and perhaps even more so, to the Anglophone world. I would argue that if women helped shaped theatre, theatre also allowed them to speak out and act out in ways that had never before been possible.

By 1758 when Rousseau wrote his letter, Anglophone women had been involved with theatre for almost 100 years. During this time—and because of the involvement of actresses and women playwrights—Anglophone theatre underwent tremendous transformation. Transatlantic acceptance of theatre opened up new venues for performers and increased the number of celebrities. Theatre spaces grew in order to house larger audiences drawn to see performances of famous actresses. Just as actresses assumed the fashions of other women and wore the cast off clothes of duchesses and queens, so too, did women in the audience begin dressing in the fashions of actresses. It is both strange to imagine and important to remember that before actresses there were no celebrity performers. There were also no plays focused on women—no "She-Tragedies" or "Women-in-Conflict" plays and certainly no "rags to riches" stories like Nell Gwyn's use of the stage to rise from London slum to king's mistress. Before Aphra Behn became involved with theatre there were no "authentic" costumes like the native headdresses she gave to Thomas Killigrew's King's Company. Public fascination with actresses and, to a lesser extent, women playwrights, made them part of the daily gossip, as much material culture as material girls—as

their images were painted, personal lives were critiqued, fashion sense was copied, and what they said and did was discussed, quoted, criticized and admired. The controversy they generated propelled them into the spotlight but also gave them a place to speak out and allowed women to enter into the public realm as performers, authors, political critics, fashion icons, celebrities, social climbers, cultural diplomats, and social changers.

An enormous amount of feminine energy went into the production of theatre during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries yet, sadly, very few women involved with theatre are remembered either by name or for what they accomplished. While Aphra Behn, Susanna Centlivre, Hannah Cowley, Elizabeth Inchbald, and Mercy Otis Warren, all playwrights and intellectuals, are probably the most recognized figures discussed in this work, most of the other women mentioned have been forgotten. Nell Gwyn is known for having been the king's mistress, but most people forget that she was an actress and instead consider her a prostitute who slept her way to the top. The first professional actress who performed onstage in London in 1662 may have been Margaret Hughes, or it may have been Anne Marshall. No one knows definitively. Likewise, the first Anglophone women playwright remains a mystery and likely wrote as early as three centuries before Aphra Behn, who is often considered the first woman playwright of note. Katherine of Sutton (Abbess of Barking Nunnery 1363-1376), Jane Lumley (1537-1578), Elizbaeth Carey, Viscountess of Palkland (1585-1639); Mary Sidney Herbert (1561-1621), Elizabeth Cary (1585-1639), Mary Wroth (1587-1652), and Jane and Margaret Cavendish (1620/21-1669 and 1623-1673) all wrote, translated or co-authored dramas before Behn began writing for the stage. Even Behn knew the power of celebrity status and wanted to *be* remembered. She had her portrait painted, and conflicting biographies floated around London about her early life. Behn cleverly turned controversy and novelty into celebrity. Her strategy was so successful that even 250 years later in 1929, Virginia Woolf wrote of Behn in *A Room of One's Own*; "All women together ought to let flowers fall upon the tomb of Aphra Behn which is,

most scandalously but rather appropriately, in Westminster Abbey, for it was she who earned them the right to speak their minds.”<sup>3</sup>

To date, historians examining the eighteenth-century transatlantic Anglophone world have overlooked connections between Anglophone women playwrights and actresses and important social and political changes during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. A *longue durée* approach to examining women’s involvement with theatre allows us to see how women were not temporary additions to theatre but became integral contributors. The experiences, efforts, performances, and plays women wrote laid stepping stones for later generations of women interested in theatre. And just as a *longue durée* approach allows us to see change (and stasis) over time, so, too, does examining transatlantic Anglophone theatre allow us to see how location, contemporary audiences and events, and attitudes toward theatre affect how theatre was locally performed, written, or experienced. Likewise, examining women playwrights and actresses gives us a more complete picture of levels of involvement women made in theatre and comparing the experiences of British and American women suggests how cultural appreciation of theatre, contemporary conflicts, and audiences affected women’s plays and performances on a local, national, and transatlantic level.

My work is unique in filling these analytical lapses, and in drawing connections between women playwrights and actresses, by suggesting that actresses and women playwrights worked together in distinctive ways to serve as cultural diplomats, professional performers and authors, and outspoken public women. How women acted and plays they wrote show how women reacted to significant social and political transatlantic changes before 1800. Their involvement in theatre suggests changes in contemporary attitudes, interests and concerns expressed by these women, particularly how these responses differed by their location. Comparing specific individuals shows how critical transatlantic exchanges took place and how these exchanges enriched both women’s professional and personal lives and reflected subtle (and sometimes not so subtle) changes in

attitude toward women in the transatlantic world. The language women used in their plays, the events they chose to include in their productions, performances that were popular with various audiences and the diverse locations where women performed or had their plays produced each enlightens our understanding of how women used theatre to respond to, engage with, and even control their worlds.

My study also sheds light on how Anglophone women contributed publicly in this socially and politically unstable transatlantic society at the end of the eighteenth century. Women writing for theatre or acting on the stage participated in social and political dialogues in a real and very public manner. The fact that women engaged so openly in such volatile discussions is especially important as most women were excluded from politics in the eighteenth century. Although women produced or published only a small percentage of the plays staged and published in the Anglophone transatlantic world between 1752-1800, opportunities for women to participate in theatre during this period were improving, particularly in Britain after 1750, and in the United States following the American Revolution.<sup>4</sup> While seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century women continued to struggle to emancipate their ideas out from under the patriarchal thumb, women playwrights and performers became consciously aware that they, as a subordinate group, possessed valuable opinions and, more importantly, that they had ideas that might posit a different future for women.<sup>5</sup> This suggestion of a “female consciousness,” while perhaps not definable as a feminist thread, created an awakening within female writers of their own important, unique voices. By century’s end, theatre influenced women writers beyond the stage. Mary Wollstonecraft, for example, embraced theatricality as a motif for discussing the French Revolution and included specific references in her essays to British and French theatre, public riots, state-sponsored performances, and street theatre, as well as Marie Antoinette as a “performer.”<sup>6</sup>

Actresses, perhaps even more than women playwrights, affected the way women were portrayed in public, and what it meant to be a celebrity in Anglophone society before 1800. As actresses, celebrities, and public figures, seventeenth-century performers Eleanor “Nell” Gwyn, Rebecca “Beck” and Anne Marshall (fl. 1661-1682), Elizabeth Boutell, Elizabeth Barry, and Anne Bracegirdle literally set the stage for how subsequent actresses were to perform and how they were accepted in society. Nell Gwyn and Moll Davis became mistresses to King Charles II and challenged the British social class system while Mary Robinson (1757-1800) became mistress to the Prince of Wales (later George IV) almost a century later. Hannah Cowley and Elizabeth Inchbald lived independently in the absence of their husbands. Mrs. Hallam/Douglass sailed across the Atlantic Ocean to become America’s first professional actress—she succeeded in spite of arriving in a cultural climate antagonistic toward British theatre—and her niece, Nancy, was the first American performer whose portrait was made. These women were beautiful, smart, creative, impassioned, adventurous, determined, hard-working, clever, funny, prolific, challenging, charming, and memorable. Yet in spite of everything they did, from challenging British social class structure, and influencing fashion, to publicly criticizing political and social systems, very few of these women are even recognized today for their enormous and world-altering contributions to theatre, performance, or to the Anglophone literary canon.

It is important to remember here that these women acted as individuals, that their experiences were unique, and that their singular contributions changed the lives of women both in theatre and in Anglophone society. The uniqueness of their stories on their own doesn’t give us a very clear cross section of how women involved with theatre affected change or were changed by their experiences, performances, works, or interactions with audiences throughout the transatlantic Anglophone world. However, by combing the various stories of late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century transatlantic Anglophone actresses and women playwrights together we gain much richer insight into just how influential women were. We see how actresses influenced

what playwrights wrote and what theatres produced. We see how women playwrights engaged in social and political conversations in a very public manner and that several of these women were highly successful even in the very competitive world of theatre dominated by male playwrights. We see how women helped to propel theatre into a more universal transatlantic acceptance and that actresses and women playwrights engaged in a form of cultural diplomacy that allowed the transatlantic exchange of Anglo social, cultural, and political ideas. By looking at where and when these women and their works traveled, what they wrote, performed, and produced and for whom, we see that women involved with theatre effected social, cultural, and political change. That is why their stories should be considered together. That is why their stories are important. As contributors to theatre, one of the most well-traveled and universally experienced forms of entertainment in Anglophone culture during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, these women should not only be appreciated for their work, they should also be recognized as some of the most successful, celebrated, and influential people of their time. Women who contributed to theatre as cultural diplomats, celebrities, and advocates for women, were incredibly hard-working, creative, engaging, and determined individuals whose experiences, performances, plays, and public interactions changed the face of theatre and how cultural engagement and exchange was enacted throughout the transatlantic Anglophone world. Looking at influential individuals allows us to see how actresses and to some extent women playwrights crafted the idea of “celebrity,” how their performances, writings, and public presence contributed to proto-feminist conversations, and how their involvement with theatre allowed them to become cultural diplomats transatlantically, intracoloniaally, and transnationally.

Anglophone women involved with theatre influenced the formation of the cult of celebrity, challenged ideas about gender and normative social behavior onstage and off, and entered intellectual landscapes prepared to engage with informed and informative social, cultural, and political discourse. Sharing cultural connections meant that as people traveled throughout the

Anglophone transatlantic world they knew what to expect when they arrived in a different Anglo colony—the empire of Britain in essence came into existence because of adherence to cultural norms. As Engel has suggested, actresses helped translate cultural norms throughout the transatlantic world. Maintaining these cultural ties within Anglophone culture was both a way for actresses and playwrights to connect with their audiences and for audiences to feel connected with the greater Anglophone socio-cultural metropole and participate in a larger, more significant shared Anglo experience.<sup>7</sup>

For over fifty years, women involved with theatre engaged in transatlantic exchanges that made them some of the most public and convincing cultural diplomats of the eighteenth century. Riding on the hard work and early success of late seventeenth-century actresses and women playwrights like Nell Gwyn, Anne Bracegirdle, Elizabeth Barry, Anne and Rebecca Marshall, Mary Knepp, Margaret Hughes, Moll Davis, Mary Saunderson, Margaret Cavendish, Aphra Behn, Delarivier Manley, Mary Pix, and Susanna Centlivre, eighteenth-century actresses and women playwrights became bonafide celebrities as they challenged social expectations of women, and brought theatre to transatlantic audiences. From the very first professional theatrical performances in America we see how important women were in these exchanges. For example, Mrs. Hallam/Douglass gave the first known professional theatrical performance in a moment of cultural exchange with the Cherokee in Williamsburg in 1752. That performance so moved the Cherokee chief's partner that she demanded the onstage fighting cease. Charles Willson Peale's portrait of Nancy Hallam in 1772 was the first portrait ever painted of an American actor and while her cousin, Isabella Mattocks had her image painted, sketched, and drawn dozens of times, and while Mattocks was a far more celebrated performer, Nancy Hallam's portrait suggests a moment when American actresses ascend to celebrities. Mercy Otis Warren published political plays as she sought to unite the colonies against the British, pushing a unified cultural "American" identity that should stand up against the oppressive British government. At the same

time on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, Hannah Cowley's plays lauded the great British Empire and sought to showcase how women had an important place in this expanding British world. Elizabeth Inchbald, Susanna Rowson, and Sarah Pogson Smith all wrote plays that challenged Anglophone society's views of women as victims and how women should and ought to respond in the face of violence. Each of these playwrights looked beyond their own small communities to the greater world noting that the violence facing women abroad could and should be examined as a universal experience.

As cultural diplomats theatre women helped to solidify connections between Britain and America, palliate the political differences of the period, and engage audiences in conversations about national identity. They provided critical cultural cohesion as well as social and political civic awareness during this volatile period. Acting as intentional cultural diplomats they influenced Anglophone theatre in ways that helped both to solidify the cultural connection between Britain and America, palliating the political differences of the period, while at the same time helped to define distinctive national identities. Yet in addition to the intentionality of their performances, plays, and public interactions, Anglophone theatre women also engaged in transatlantic diplomacy as accidental or unintentional diplomats. Their movements through the transatlantic world were not always motivated by the desire to make cultural, social, or political connections or to promote transatlantic conversations since for most of these women, particularly for actresses, their focus was on employment, fame, and a sustained career or improved social standing. That some of these women did perform in roles as cultural diplomats came about because of their desire to connect with various audiences in an attempt to gain public attention. Regardless of whether Anglophone theatre women within the transatlantic world intentionally or accidentally engaged in cultural diplomacy both aspects of their activities were important.

The social, political, and cultural roles of actresses, women playwrights and female characters in plays changed between 1660 and 1800 both reflecting contemporary ideology and

challenging conceptions of acceptable female normativity. Ultimately, actresses and women playwrights between 1752 and 1807 were able to enact diplomatic engagement that helped strengthen cultural bonds between Britain and its transatlantic colonies and America in spite of initial resistance in America to theatre, the American Revolution, and America's desire to assert its own national voice and identity.

By the last decade of the eighteenth century Anglophone actresses and women playwrights had become increasingly influential and important social, cultural, and political commentators. Actresses became some of America's first celebrities and women playwrights used theatre as a public platform to argue for social and political agendas. They challenged social norms and gender normativity, offered potential roles for women in this new social order, and successfully reflected an awareness of their effectiveness as cultural diplomats. In the face of war they presented varying depictions of violence—violence done to women, violence threatening women, violence enacted by women—as the transatlantic world experienced three significant revolutions: the American Revolution, the French Revolution, and the Haitian Revolution. They had established their presence and importance from their first foray onto the English stage in 1660, when they actively began to change the face of Anglophone theatre, literally altering how the public imagined and experienced female bodies and actions onstage and off, how audiences engaged with actresses as people and as popular icons, how readers read, discussed, listened to, and engaged with plays women wrote; and most importantly, how they began to understand the role of women in society.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> While Rousseau commented that in contemporary plays women instruct, he also felt that the arts and sciences corrupted man. Amal Banerjee, "Rousseau's Concept of Theatre," in *British Journal of Aesthetics* (1977) 17 (2): 171-177.

<sup>2</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Politics and the Arts: Letter to M. D'Alembert on the Theatre*. Introduced and translated by Allan Bloom (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1960), 49.

<sup>3</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (London: Harcourt Brace, 1929), 69.

<sup>4</sup> Playwright and actress Susanna Rowson's former employer, Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, admired for her own sense of fashion-forwardness, was a devoted patron of the arts, lauded the colonial American

cause and was given to wear red, white and blue tri-corn hats both during the American and French Revolutions. For more information on Georgiana, see Amanda Foreman, *Georgiana, The Duchess of Devonshire* (London: Modern Library, 2001).

<sup>5</sup> See Barbara Kiefer Lewalksi, *Writing Women in Jacobean England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Joy Wiltenburg, *Disorderly Women and Female Power in the Street Literature of Early Modern England and Germany* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1992); Jo Wallwork and Paul Salzman, eds., *Early Modern Englishwomen Testing Ideas* (Burlington and Aldershot: Ashgate Press, 2011); Sara Heller Mendelson, *The Mental World of Stuart Women* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987) and Cheryl Turner, *Living by the Pen: Women Writers in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge Press, 1992); Paul Salzman, *Early Modern Women's Writing: An Anthology 1560-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.)

<sup>6</sup> Lisa Plummer Crafton, *Transgressive Theatricality, Romanticism and Mary Wollstonecraft* (Farnham, Surrey, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2011), 78-79.

<sup>7</sup> Gill Perry's study on the actresses of the Georgian era, *Spectacular Flirtations: Viewing the Actress in British Art and Theatre, 1768-1820* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008) discusses important visual imagery that arose that portrayed these actresses in the spectrum of their public and private performances as whores and coquettes, muses and celebrities. His work examines the close relationship between two forms of visual arts—fine arts and theatre—and suggests that the visual culture that surrounded these actresses arose as an attempt to professionalize theatre and fine art. In so doing, many of these actresses were transformed into symbols of fashion. Artists used popular actresses to popularize their own work and actresses at the same time became the muses of popular artists.

## APPENDICES

## A

## BRITISH WOMEN PLAYWRIGHTS

Most Popular Plays Staged by Number of Years Produced. Playwrights whose works were produced during the Revolutionary Era and their plays are listed in red.<sup>1</sup>

Rank/Author	Play Title (genre)	Date First Staged	# Years Produced
1. Susanna Centlivre	<i>The Busy Body</i> (comedy)	1709	87
2. Susanna Centlivre	<i>A Bold Stroke for a Wife</i> (comedy)	1718	75
3. Susanna Centlivre	<i>The Wonder! A Woman Keeps a Secret</i> (comedy)	1714	53
4. Aphra Behn	<i>The Rover</i> (comedy)	1677	51
5. Aphra Behn	<i>Emperor of the Moon</i> (farce)	1687	32
6. Susanna Centlivre	<i>The Gamester</i> (comedy)	1705	31
7. Hannah Cowley	<i>Who's the Dupe?</i> (comedy)	1779	21
8. Hannah Cowley	<i>The Belle's Stratagem</i> (comedy)	1780	20
9. Sophia Lee	<i>The Chapter of Accidents</i> (comedy)	1780	20
10. Frances Brooke	<i>Rosina</i> (opera)	1782	19
11. Elizabeth Inchbald	<i>The Mogul Tale</i> (farce)	1784	16
12. E. Inchbald	<i>The Midnight Hour</i> (comedy)	1787	12
13. E. Inchbald	<i>The Child of Nature</i> (comedy)	1788	12
14. Hannah Cowley	<i>The Runaway</i> (comedy)	1776	11
15. Susanna Cibber	<i>The Oracle</i> (comedy)	1752	10
16. E. Inchbald	<i>Such Things Are</i> (comedy)	1786	10
17. Hannah More	<i>Percy</i> (tragedy)	1777	10
18. Frances Brooke	<i>Marian of the Grange</i> (opera)	1788	9
19. Hannah Cowley	<i>Which Is the Man?</i> (comedy)	1782	9
20. E. Inchbald	<i>I'll Tell You What</i> (comedy)	1785	9
21. E. Inchbald	<i>Everyone Had His Fault</i> (comedy)	1792	9
22. Aphra Behn	<i>The False Count</i> (comedy)	1681	7
23. Susanna Centlivre	<i>Love's Contrivance</i> (comedy)	1703	7
24. E. Inchbald	<i>Animal Magnetism</i> (comedy)	1788	7
25. E. Inchbald	<i>The Wedding Day</i> (comedy)	1794	7
26. Frances Sheridan	<i>The Discovery</i> (comedy)	1763	7
27. Mariana Starke	<i>The Widow of Malabar</i> (tragedy)	1790	7
28. Aphra Behn	<i>The Feigned Curtizans</i> (comedy)	1676	6
29. Susanna Centlivre	<i>The Man's Bewitched</i> (comedy)	1709	6
30. Susanna Centlivre	<i>Marplot (Busy Body II)</i> (comedy)	1710	6
31. Catherine Clive	<i>The Rehearsal</i> (comedy)	1750	5
32. Harriet Horncastle Hooke	<i>The Double Disguise</i> (??)	1784	5

<sup>1</sup> Taken from Judith Phillips Stanton, "'This New-Found Path Attempting': Women Dramatists in England, 1660-1800" in *Curtain Calls: British and American Women and the Theatre, 1660-1820*, ed. Mary Anne Schofield and Cecilia Macheski, Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1991, pp 325-356.

33. Mary Pix	<i>The Spanish Wives</i> (farce)	1696	5
34. Aphra Behn	<i>The Forc'd Marriage</i> (tragicomedy)	1670	4
35. Aphra Behn	<i>The City Heiress</i> (comedy)	1682	4
36. Aphra Behn	<i>The Lucky Chance</i> (comedy)	1686	4
37. Hannah Cowley	<i>A Bold Stroke for a Husband</i> (comedy)	1783	4
38. Mary Pix	<i>Ibrahim</i> (tragedy)	1696	4
39. Jane Aft Holt Wiseman	<i>Antiochus</i> (tragedy)	1701	4
40. Aphra Behn	<i>Abdelezar</i> (tragedy)	1676	3
41. Aphra Behn	<i>The Young King</i> (tragicomedy)	1676	3
42. Susanna Centlivre	<i>The Beau's Duel</i> (comedy)	1701	3
43. Susanna Centlivre	<i>A Bickerstaff's Burying</i> (farce)	1710	3
44. Susanna Centlivre	<i>A Wife Well-Managed</i> (farce)	1724	3
45. Susanna Centlivre	<i>The Artifice</i> (comedy)	1720	3
46. Hannah Cowley	<i>More Ways Than One</i> (comedy)	1783	3
47. Hannah Cowley	<i>A Day in Turkey</i> (comicopera)	1791	3
48. Elizabeth Griffith	<i>The School for Rakes</i> (comedy)	1769	3
49. Eliza Haywood	<i>A Wife to be Lett</i> (comedy)	1723	3
50. Eliza Haywood	<i>The Opera of Operas</i> (opera)	1733	3
51. E. Inchbald	<i>Wives as they were</i> (comedy)	1797	3
52. E. Inchbald	<i>Lovers' Vows</i> (comedy)	1798	3
53. Katherine Philips	<i>Pompey</i> (tragedy)	1662	3

**B**

**MOST SUCCESSFUL DRAMATISTS BY # PLAYS STAGED AND PUBLISHED**

Author	Plays staged & Published	Plays Staged	# Years of Plays Staged	Plays Published	# Years Published	
Susanna Centlivre	19	20		289	20	122
Aphra Behn	19	21		128	20	37
Elizabeth Inchabld	16	21		105	18	34
Mary Pix	12	13		21	12	14
Hannah Cowley	11	13		80	11	27
Elizabeth Griffith	5	5		8	7	10
Catherine Trotter	5	5		5	5	5
Eliza (Fowler) Haywood	4	6		10	4	7
Hannah More	3	3		13	8	73
Frances Brooke	3	3		29	4	12
Delariviere Manley	3	5		6	3	4
Sophia Lee	2	2		21	3	8
Frances Sheridan	2	2		8	3	7
Mariana Starke	2	2		9	3	7
Katherine (Fowler) Philips	2	2		5	2	9
Lady Elizabeth Craven Anspach	2	4		4	3	3

Author	Plays staged & Published	Plays Staged	# Years of Plays Staged	Plays Published	# Years Published	
Charlotte (Ramsay) Lennox	2	2		3	3	3
“Ariadne”	2	2		2	2	2
Catherine Clive	1	5		9	1	1
Mrs. (Harford) Hoper	1	4		4	1	1
Charlotte (Cibber)						

Charke	1	3	3	1	1
Joanna Baillie	1	1	1	3	9
Hannah Brand	1	1	3	3	3
Lady Wallace (Eglinton Maxwell)	1	1	1	3	3
Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle	0	0	0	25	25
Anna Plumptre	0	0	0	7	9
Maria Geisweiler	0	0	0	4	6
Jane West	0	0	0	4	5
Sophia Raymond aft Clay, Lady Burrell	0	0	0	3	3
Anne Hughes	0	0	0	3	3
Elizabeth Ryves	0	0	0	3	3
Mrs. Weddell	0	0	0	3	3

**Most Successful Women Writing During the Revolutionary Era: 19** (Elizabeth Inchbald, Hannah Cowley, Elizabeth Griffith, Hannah More, Frances Brooke, Sophia Lee, Mariana Starke, Lady Elizabeth Craven Anspach, Charlotte Lennox, Catherine Clive, Joanna Baillie, Hannah Brand, Lady Wallace (Eglinton Maxwell), Anna Plumptre, Maria Geisweiler, Jane West, Sophia Raymond Lady Burrell, Anne Hughes, Eliz. Ryves)

## C

**170 PLAYS WRITTEN BY 63 BRITISH WOMEN; PUBLISHED OR PRODUCED ON  
STAGE BETWEEN 1770-1800<sup>2</sup>**

Comedy (c)  
Tragedy (t)  
Tragicomedy (tc)  
Opera (o)  
Musical Piece (m)  
Farce (f)  
Burlesque (b)  
Pantomime (p)  
Drama (d)  
Privately Staged (ps)  
Privately Printed (pp)  
Translated (trans)  
Flourished (fl): lived, birth and death dates unknown

Dramatist is listed by surname under which she published. Given name is second and maiden name, if known, is in parentheses. Some plays were written prior to 1770 but were also staged and published (authors noted in red) between 1770 and 1800. These are included in the list to show which plays were popular to audiences during the Revolutionary Era. Publication dates are listed in bold to distinguish from the date a play was staged.

<b>Author</b>	<b>Play/Genre</b>	<b>Date Staged/Published</b>
Anspach, Lady Elizabeth Craven, Margravine of (1750-1828)	<i>The Sleepwalker</i> (c)	1778 (ps)/ <b>1778(pp)</b>
	<i>The Miniature Picture</i> (c)	1780/ <b>1780</b>
	<i>The Silver Tankard; or, The Point at Portsmouth</i> (m)	1781/--
	<i>The Arcadian Pastoral</i> (m)	1782(ps)--
	<i>The Statue Feast</i> (d)	
	<i>The Yorkshire Ghost</i> (c)	1784 (ps)--
	<i>The Georgian Princess</i> (o)	1799 and 1799(ps)??
	<i>Puss in Boots</i> (p) <i>The Robbers</i> (t/trans.)	1799 (ps) 1798(ps)/ <b>1799</b>
Baillie, Joanna (1762-1851)	<i>De Monfort</i> (t)	1800/ <b>1798,1799,1800</b>
	<i>Count Basil</i> (t)	--/ <b>1798, 1799, 1800</b>
	<i>The Tryal</i> (c)**	--/ <b>1798, 1799, 1800</b>
**each of these plays was published in <i>Plays on the Passions</i>		
Barrell, Maria (fl. 1790)	<i>The Captive</i> (d)	--/ <b>1790</b>

<sup>2</sup> Taken from Judith Phillips Stanton, "'This New-Found Path Attempting': Women Dramatists in England, 1660-1800" in *Curtain Calls: British and American Women and the Theatre, 1660-1820*, ed. Mary Anne Schofield and Cecilia Macheski, Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1991, pp 325-356.

Behn, Aphra (1640-1689)	<i>The Rover; or, The Banish'd Cavaliers Part I</i> (c) <i>Emperor of the Moon</i> (f) <i>The Widow Ranter; or, The History of Bacon in Virginia</i> (tc)	1790/-- --/1777 1789/1790
Bowes, Mary Ellen, Countess of Strathmore (1749-1800)	<i>The Siege of Jerusalem</i> (t)	--/1774
Brand, Hanna (??-1821)	<i>Huniades; or, The Siege of Belgrade</i> (t)(remained Agumunda 1791, 1792, 1794/ when performed 2 <sup>nd</sup> time in 1792) <i>Adelinda</i> (c) <i>The Conflict; or Love, Honor, and Pride</i> (c)**	1798 --/1798 --/1798
	**Each of these published in <i>Plays and Poems</i>	
Brooke, Charlotte (1740-1783)	<i>Belisarius</i> (t)	--/1795
Brooke, Frances (1724-1789)	<i>The Siege of Sinope</i> (t) <i>Rosina</i> (o) <i>Marian of the Grange</i> (o) **	1781/1781, 1781(Dublin) 1782-1800/1783-1796 (14 ed) 1788-1795, 1798, 1800/ <b>Published 1788, 1800</b>
	** published in <i>Airs, Songs, Duets, Trios and Choruses in Marian</i>	
Brunton, Anna (Ross) (fl. 1788)	<i>The Cottagers</i> (co)	--/1788, 3 editions
Burgess, Mrs. (fl. 1780)	<i>The Oaks; or, The Beauties of Canterbury</i> (c)	1780/1780
Burke, Miss (fl. 1793)	<i>The Ward of the Castle</i> (o) (published as <i>Songs, Duets, Choruses &amp;c in The Ward of the Castle</i> , date??)	1793/--
Burney, Fanny Aft D/Arblay (1752-1840)	<i>Hubert de Vere; a Pastoral Tragedy</i> (t) ?? <i>The Seige of Pevensey</i> (d) <i>Elberta</i> (t) (fragments) <i>Love and Fashion</i> (c) <i>The Witlings</i> (c) <i>The Woman Hater</i> (c) <i>A Busy Day</i> (c)	?? ?? 1779

	<i>Edwy and Elgiva</i> (t)	1775
	**these each listed in Berg MS	
Burrell, Sophia (Raymond) Aft Clay Lady (1750?-1802)	<i>Comala</i> (d) <i>Maximian</i> (t) <i>Theodora; or the Spanish daughter</i> (t)	--/1793 (in <i>Poems</i> ) 1800/-- --/1800
Burton, Phillipina aft Hill (fl. 1768-1787)	<i>Fashion Display'd</i> (c)	1770/--
Celesia, Dorothea (Mallet) (1738-1790)	<i>Almida</i> (t)	1771/ 1771 (3 eds)
Centlivre, Susanna (?-1723)	<i>The Stolen Heiress; or The Salamanca Doctor Outplotted</i> (c) <i>The Beau's Duel; or, A Soldier for the Ladies</i> (c) <i>The Gamester</i> (c) <i>Love at a Venture</i> (c) <i>The Busie Body</i> (c) **her most Popular play**	1779/-- 1785/-- 1790/-- 1782/-- 1770-1785, 1791-1800/ <b>Published 1771, 1774, 1776, 1777 (2 eds), 1779, 1782, 1787, 1791, 1797</b>
	<i>The Man's Bewitched; or the Devil To Do about Her</i> (c)	1784/--
	<i>Marplot; or the Second Part of the Busy Body</i> (c)	1772/--
	<i>The Wonder! A Woman Keeps a Secret</i> (c)	1770-1778, 1780-1789, 1791- 1795, 1797-1800/ <b>also published 1770, 1774-1777, 1780-1782, 1786, 1787, 1792, 1794, 1795, 1797</b>
	<i>A Wife Well Manag'd; or, Cuckoldom Prevented</i> (c)	1789/--
	<i>A Bold Stroke for a Wife</i> (c)	1770-1774, 1776-1789, 1793- 1800/ <b>also published 1774, 1776, 1780, 1783, 1790, 1791, 1794</b>
	<i>The Artifice</i> (c)	1781/--
Cibber, Susanna Marie (Arne) (1714-1766)	<i>The Oracle</i> (c/trans)	1795/1778
Cowley, Hanna (Parkhouse) (1743-1809)	<i>The Runaways</i> (c) <i>Albina, Countess Raimond</i> (t)	1776-1783, 1789-1791/ <b>also published 1776(2 eds) and 1790</b> 1779/1779 (2 ed),

		<b>and 1780 (2 ed), 1797, 1812</b>
	<i>Who's the Dupe?</i> (f)	1779-1798, 1800/ <b>1779 (2 ed), 1780 (2 ed), 1787, 1790</b>
	<i>The Belle's Strategem</i> (c)	1780-1784, 1786-1800/ <b>1782, 1783, 1787, 1794</b>
	<i>The School of Eloquence</i> (interlude)	1780/--
	<i>The World As It Goes; or</i> <i>A Party at Montpelier</i> (f)	1781/--
	(also performed in 1781 under title <i>Second Thoughts are Best</i> )	
	<i>Which is the Man?</i> (c)	1782-1788, 1790, 1791/ <b>1783 (2 ed), 1784, 1785</b>
	<i>A Bold Stroke for a</i> <i>Husband</i> (c)	1783, 1784, 1786, 1795/ <b>1783, 1784 (3 ed), 1787, 1793</b>
	<i>More Ways Than One</i> (c)	1783, 1784, 1789/ <b>1784 (4 ed)</b>
	<i>A School for Greybeards; or,</i> <i>The Mourning Bride</i> (c)	1786, 1787/ <b>1786, 1787 (2 ed)</b>
	<i>The Fate of Sparta; or, The</i> <i>Rival Kings</i> (t)	1788/ <b>1788 (3 eds)</b>
	<i>A Day in Turkey; or, The</i> <i>Russian Slaves</i> (c o)	1791, 1792, 1794/ <b>1791, 1792</b>
	(published in 1791 as <i>Airs, Duets and Choruses in ... A Day in Turkey</i> )	
	<i>The Town Before You</i> (c)	1794, 1795/ <b>1795</b>
Callum, Mrs (fl 1775)	<i>Charlotte: or One Thousand Seven</i> <i>Hundred and Seventy Three</i> (d)	1775/--
Cuthbertson, Miss (fl. 1793)	<i>Anna</i> (c)	1793/--
D'Aguilar, Rose later Lawrence (fl. 1799)	<i>Gortz of Berlingen with the</i> <i>Iron Hand</i> (d/ trans)	--/ <b>1799</b>
Deverell, Mary (1737?-?)	<i>Mary, Queen of Scots; An</i> <i>Historical Tragedy, or</i> <i>Dramatic Poem</i> (t)	--/ <b>1792(private publ)</b>
Du Bois, Lady Dorothea (1728-1774)	<i>The Divorce</i> (m entertainment?)	1771/ <b>1771</b>
	<i>The Haunted Grove</i> (d)	1772/--
Edwards, Miss (fl. 1776-1780)	<i>Otho and Rutha: a Dramatic Tale</i> (d)	--/ <b>1780</b>
Gardner, Sarah (Cheyney) (fl. 1763-1798)	<i>The Advertisement; or , a Bold Stroke for</i> <i>a Husband</i> (c)	1777/--
	(acted under the title <i>The Matrimonial Advertisement</i> )	

	<i>Charity</i> (f, no date)	
	<i>The Loyal Subject</i> (c, no date)	
Geisweiler, Maria (fl. 1799)	<i>Crime from Ambition</i> (d, trans)	--/1799, 1800
	<i>Joanna of Montfaucon</i> (d, trans)	--/1799, 1800
	<i>The Noble Lie</i> (d, trans)	--/1799 (2 eds)
	<i>Poverty and Nobleness of Mind</i> (d, trans)	--/1799 (2 eds)
Griffith, Elizabeth (1727-1793)	<i>The School for Rakes</i> (c) 1769, 1771, 1776/1769 (3 eds), 1770, 1795 (2 eds), 1797	1772/1772
	<i>A Wife in the Right</i> (c)	1772/1772
	<i>The Barber of Seville; or The Useless Precaution</i> (c)	--/1776
	<i>The Times</i> (c)	1779, 1780/1780 (2 eds)
Harlow, Elizabeth (fl. 1789)	<i>The English Tavern at Berlin</i> (c)	--/1789
Holford, Margaret (Wrench) (fl. 1785-1814)	<i>Neither's the Man</i> (c)	1799/ 1799, 1806
Hook, Harriet Horncastle (Madden) (fl. 1784)	<i>The Double Disguise</i> (co)	1784-1788/1784
Houston, Lady (?-1780)	<i>The Coquettes; or, the Gallant in The Closet</i> (c, trans, no date)	staged in Scotland
Hughes, Anne (fl. 1784-1790)	<i>Cordelia</i> (t)	--/1790
	<i>Constantia</i> (t)	--/1790
	<i>Aspacia</i> (t)**	--/1790
	** each published in <i>Moral Drama Intended for private representation</i> **	
Inchbald, Elizabeth (1753-1821)	<i>The Mogul Tale, or the Descent Of the Balloon</i> (f)	1784-1794, 1796-1800/ 1788 (2 eds), 1796
	<i>Appearance Is Against Them</i> (f)	1785, 1804/ 1785, 1786
	<i>I'll Tell You What</i> (c)	1785-1792, 1794/ 1786 (2 eds), 1787 (2 eds)
	<i>The Widow's Vow</i> (f)	1786, 1787/ 1786 (2 eds), 1787
	<i>Such Things Are</i> (d)	1786-1793, 1796, 1798/ 1788 (3 eds), 1800
	<i>The Midnight Hour; or War of Wits</i> (c, trans)	1787-1797, 1799/ 1787
	<i>All on a Summer's Day</i> (c)	1787/--
	<i>Animal Magnetism</i> (f)	1788-1792, 1794, 1797/ 1789

- (2 eds), 1792**
- The Child of Nature* (c) 1788-1792, 1794-1800/ **1788**  
*The Married Man* (c) 1790/ **1789 (2 eds), 1796**  
*Next-Door Neighbours* (c) 1791, 1792/ **1791 (2 eds)**  
*A Simple Story* (d) 1791/--  
*Hue and Cry* (f) 1791, 1797/--  
*Young Men and Old Women* (f) 1792/--  
*Everyone Has His Fault* (c) 1792-1800/**1792, 1793 (6 eds), 1794 (2 eds), 1795, 1805**  
*The Wedding Day* (f) 1794-1800/ **1794, 1795, 1806**  
*Wives as they were, and Maids As the are* (c) 1797, 1798, 1800/ **1797 (7 eds), 1816**  
*Lovers' Vows* (c) 1798, 1799, 1800/**1798, 1799**  
*The Wise Men of the East* (c) 1799, 1800/**1799**  
*To Marry, or Not to Marry* (c) 1805/**1805**
- Jordan, Dorothy (Bland)  
From Ford (1761-1838) *The Spoiled Child* (f) attributed 1790/**1799, 1805**  
(1799 pirated Dublin ed.; 1805 pub for her benefit)
- Kemble, Marie-Therese  
(De Camp) (1775-1838) *First Faults* (c) 1799 (staged for her benefit)/--
- Lee, Harriett (1757-1851) *The New Peerage, or, Our Eyes May deceive us* (c) 1787/**1787 (3 eds), 1788**  
*The Mysterious Marriage; Or The Heirship of Roselva*(t) --/**1798 (2 eds)**
- Lee, Sophia (1750-1824) *The Chapter of Accidents* (c) 1780-1791, 1793-1800/**1780 (2 eds), 1781 (3 eds), 1782, 1792, 1796, 1797**  
*Almeyda, Queen of Granada* (t) 1796/ **1796 (4 eds)**
- Lennox, Charlotte (Ramsay)  
(1729?-1804) *Old City Manners* (c) 1775, 1776/ **1775**
- Marishall, Jean  
(fl. 1766-1789) *Sir Harry Gaylove, or Comedy in Embryo* (c) --/**1772**
- Metcalfe, Catherine (?-1790) *Julia de Roubigne'* (t) 1790 (staged at Bath)/--
- More, Hannah (1745-1833) *The Search After Happiness* --/**1773(2 eds), 1774 (3 eds), (pastoral drama) 1775, 1777, 1778, 1785, 1787, 1791, 1793, 1794, 1796, 1800**  
*The Inflexible Captive* (t) 1775/ **1774 (4 eds), 1775**  
*Percy* (t) 1777-1780, 1782, 1785-1788  
1797/ **1777, 1778 (3 eds), 1780, 1784, 1785, 1787, 1788, 1807**  
*The Fatal Falsehood* (t) 1779/ **1779, 1780, 1789**

	<i>Moses in the Bulrushes</i> (d)	--/1782 (2 eds), 1783, 1784, 1785, 1789, 1791, 1793, 1796, 1798, 1799, 1800
	<i>David and Goliath</i> (d)**	--/1782 (2 eds), 1783, 1784, 1785, 1789, 1791, 1793, 1796, 1798, 1799, 1800
	<i>Belshazzar</i> (d) **	--/1782 (2 eds), 1783, 1784, 1785, 1789, 1791, 1793, 1796, 1798, 1799, 1800
	<i>Daniel</i> (d) **	--/1782 (2 eds), 1783, 1784, 1785, 1789, 1791, 1793, 1796, 1798, 1799, 1800
		** Published in <i>Sacred Dramas</i>
O'Brien, Mary (fl. 1785-1790)	<i>The Temple of Virtue</i> (o)	no date
	<i>The Fallen Patriot: A Comedy in 5 Acts</i> (c)	--/ 1790
Opie, Amelia (Alderson) (1769-1853)	<i>Adelaide</i> (t)	1791 (privately staged)/--
Parsons, Eliza (Phelp) (1748?-1811)	<i>The Intrigues of a Morning; or, An Hour in Paris</i> (f)	1792/1792
Penny, Anne (Hughes) from Christian (1731-1784)	<i>The Birthday. An Entertainment in three acts</i> (d) (published in <i>Poems with a Dramatic Entertainment</i> )	--/1771, 1780
Plumptre, Anna (1760-1818)	<i>The Count of Burgandy</i> (t, trans)	--/1789, 1799
	<i>The Natural Son; or The Lovers' Vows</i> (d, trans)	--/1798 (2 eds)
	<i>The Force of Calumny</i> (d, trans)	--/ 1799
	<i>La Perouse</i> (d, trans)	--/ 1799
	<i>Spaniards in Peru; or, The Death of Rolla</i> (t, trans)**	--/ 1799 (2 eds)
	**also published as <i>Pizarro. The Spaniards in Peru</i>	
	<i>The Virgin of the Sun</i> (d, trans)	--/ 1799
	<i>The Widow and the Riding-Horse</i> (f, trans)	--/ 1799
Pye, Joel-Henrietta [Jael] (Mendez) from Campbell (1737?-1782)	<i>The Capricious Lady</i> (f)	1771
Richardson, Elizabeth (d. 1779)	<i>The Double Deception; or, The Lovers Perplex'd</i> (c)	1779, 1780/--
Roberts, Miss R.		

(fl. 1763-1788)	<i>Malcolm</i> (t)	--/ <b>1779</b>
Robertson, Mrs. (fl. 1800)	<i>Ellindall or, The Abbey of St. Aubert</i> (d) 1800/--	
Robertson, Mrs. T. (fl. 1796)	<i>The Enchanted Island</i>	1796 (staged in Dublin)/--
Robinson, Mary (Darby), Pseudo. Perdita (1758-1800)	<i>The Lucky Escape</i> (o) <i>Nobody</i> (f) <i>The Sicilian Lover</i> (t)	1778/ <b>1778</b> 1794/-- --/ <b>1796</b>
Ryves, Elizabeth (1750-1797)	<i>The Triumph of Hymen</i> (masque) ** <i>The Prude</i> (o) ** <i>The Debt of Honour</i> (c) (** published in <i>Poems on Several Occasions</i> )	--/ <b>1777</b> --/ <b>1777</b> --/ <b>1777?</b>
Sanders, Charlotte Elizabeth (fl. 1787-1803)	<i>The Birds' Nest</i> (d)** <i>The Little Gamester</i> (d) ** (** published in <i>The Little Family</i> )	--/ <b>1797, 1800</b> --/ <b>1797, 1800</b>
Sheridan, Alicia aft Le Fanu (daughter of Frances Sheridan) (fl. 1781)	<i>The Ambiguous Lover</i> (f)	1781/--
<b>Sheridan, Frances (Chamberlaine)</b> (1724-1766)	<i>The Discovery</i> (c)** (** first staged in 1763, first published 1763)	1776, 1779, 1780, 1782, 1783/ <b>1776, 1792, 1797</b>
Smith, Charlotte (Turner) (1749-1806)	<i>What is She?</i> (c)	1799/ <b>1799 (3 eds), 1800</b>
Starke, Mariana (1762?-1838)	<i>The Sword of Peace; or, A Voyage of Love</i> (c) <i>The British Orphans</i> (t) 1790 (privately staged at Lady Crespigny's theatre)/-- <i>The Widow of Malabar</i> (t) <i>The Tournament</i> (t)	1788, 1789/ <b>1788 (2 eds), 1789, 1792</b> 1790-1792, 1794-1796, 1798/ <b>1791 (6 eds), 1796, 1799</b> --/ <b>1800, 1803</b>
Trimmer, Sarah (Kirby)	<i>The Little Hermit; or, The Rural Adventure</i> (d)	--/ <b>1788</b>

- (published in *The Juvenile Magazine*)
- Turner, Margaret  
(fl. 1790) *The Gentle Shepherd: A Scotch pastoral*  
by Allan Ramsay, attempted in English (d)--/ **1790**
- Wallace, Eglinton (Maxwell), Lady  
(?-1803) *Diamond Cut Diamond* (c, trans) --/ **1787**
- The Ton, or, Follies of Fashion* (c) 1788/ **1788**  
*The Whim* (c) --/ **1795**  
*Cortes* (**LOST**, named on title page of *The Whim*)
- West, Jane (1758-1852) *Edmund, Surnamed Ironside* (t) --/ **1791, 1799**  
(published in *Miscellaneous Poetry*)  
*Adela; or the Barons of Old* (t) --/ **1799**  
(published in *Poems and Plays*)  
*How Will It End?* (c) --/ **1799**  
(published in *Poems and Plays*)  
*The Minstrel; or, The Heir of Arundel* (t)--/ **1799**  
(published in *Poems and Plays*)
- Yearsley, Ann (Cromartie)  
(1752-1806) *Earl Goodwin, an Historical Play* (t) --/ **1791**  
*The Ode Rejected* (c) (named in *Earl Goodwin*, **LOST**)

## D

### TIMELINE OF EVERYDAY LIFE AND IMPORTANT ANGLOPHONE THEATRE AND SOCIO-CULTURAL EVENTS OF INTEREST, 1731-1800

1731

- John Bevis discovers the Crab Nebula
- Benjamin Franklin establishes the Library Company of Philadelphia, the first circulating library in America
- Pope, *Moral Essays*
- Second Treaty of Vienna signed
- Construction of a prime minister's residence at #10 Downing Street begun (prime ministers still live there)
- John Hadley invents the quadrant, important navigational instrument
- Jethro Tull invents the seed drill
- Anti-turnpike riots in Gloucestershire
- Edward Cave, *Gentleman's Magazine*
- Monument to Sir Isaac Newton erected
- Physician John Arbuthnot, one of the "Scriblerians," publishes the first book advocating dieting for health reasons, *An Essay Concerning the Nature of Aliments*
- Half a pint of rum becomes the official daily ration for all hands in the British Navy
- A major river improvement project, one of the first of the Industrial Revolution, completed in Staffordshire
- Orchids are cultivated for the first time, by English haberdasher Peter Collinson
- A Spanish coastguard cuts off the ear of Peter Jenkins, an English trader, for defying the Spanish trade monopoly in America, sparking "The War of Jenkins' Ear"

1732

- Covent Garden Opera House opens
- Oglethorpe founds Georgia as a colony for debtors
- Academy of Ancient Music founded
- Society of Dilettanti founded for the study of antiquities
- Franklin, *Poor Richard's Almanac*
- World-wide flu epidemic; continues into 1733
- Hat Act--forbids Americans to make beaver-felt hats, forcing them to buy imported, expensive British-made hats
- English chemist Thomas Dover invents the first sedative, made of opium, ipecacuanha, and sulfate of potash
- Daniel Neal, *The History of the Puritans or Protestant Nonconformists*
- Theatre Royal Covent Garden constructed (designed by Edward Shepherd). Opened 7 December 1732. William Congreve's *The Way of the World* was the opening production.

1733

- Zenger trial in New York; landmark case in freedom of the press
- Perambulator (baby carriage) invented
- Molasses Tax imposes high duties on sugar products not imported from British colonies
- St. George's Hospital founded
- Freemason's Lodge opened in the American Colonies
- St. John Slave Revolt, started 23 November. One of the earliest and longest slave revolts in the Americas. Slaves captured the fort in Coral Bay and took control of most of the island. The revolt ended in mid-1734 when troops sent from Martinique defeated the Akwamu slaves.
- White's Club destroyed by fire; depicted in Hogarth's *Rake's Progress*
- Susannah (Arne) Cibber joins Haymarket Theatre as a singer of major roles

1734

- Kay invents the flying shuttle
- First fire extinguisher
- Voltaire, *Lettres Philosophiques*
- Pope, *Essay on Man*
- First English translation of the *Koran* (George Sale)
- Thomas Coke, great agricultural reformer, begins his work at Holkham Hall in Norfolk
- Oglethorpe founds Savannah
- *Pygmalion*, First ballet presented at the Theatre Royal Covent Garden. Marie Salle discarded tradition and corset and danced in diaphanous robes.
- Jonathan Edwards' sermons begin the "Great Awakening" in New England
- Bank of England moves to its present quarters in Threadneedle Street, in the heart of the City
- Susannah (Arne) Cibber prevailed upon by her father to become the second wife of Theophilus Cibber (nasty, ugly, squat little man who was the son of Colley Cibber, poet laureate and manager of Drury Lane Theatre) to help provide for herself and her parents. Married 21 April 1734.
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1735

- Linneaus publishes his *Systema Naturae*, the founding book for the science of taxonomy
- Swift's *Works* published
- No opera season in London
- Harrison develops the chronometer to help determine the longitude of ships at sea
- Charles Marie discovers rubber (in South America)
- Hogarth, *The Rake's Progress*; opens his own academy
- Samuel Johnson's first book, a translation of Lobo's *A Voyage to Abyssinia*
- Handel's first season of operas begin, Theatre Royal Covent Garden
- Death of physician and author John Arbuthnot

1736

- Charles Avison organizes some subscription concerts--among England's first
- William Boyce is appointed composer at the Chapel Royal (English composer patronized by German king)

- Henry Fielding becomes manager of the New Theatre; farce, *Pasquin*
- Linnaeus *Fundamenta Botanica*
- Jonathan Hulls, first steamship design
- Ainsworth, *Latin-English, English-Latin Dictionary*
- Bishop William Warburton, *The Alliance between Church and State*
- Porteous Riots in Edinburgh
- A third bill to control gin consumption passed (7000 unlicensed gin shops in London)
- Witchcraft declared not criminal

1737

- Samuel Johnson and David Garrick move to London. Johnson begins to work for *The Gentleman's Magazine*.
- John Wesley publishes *Psalms and Hymns*
- Licensing Act passed. Regulates the number of playhouses and puts plays under the censorship of the Lord Chamberlain
- G. F. Handel writes *Arminio, Giustine, Berenice*; despite illness, continues active for many years
- Both opera houses fail in London
- Copper coins minted in the American colonies for the first time
- Placing a "price on the head" of Dick Turpin raises his status from common criminal to famous outlaw
- Licensing Act 1737: mandated governmental approval of any play before it could be performed and thereby created something of a vacuum of new material to perform.
- Famous actress (Miss Frances Barton), Mrs. "Fanny" Abington, born.

1738

- Johnson's *London* published.
- John Wesley and George Whitfield make an evangelistic trip to the American colonies.
- Daniel Bernoulli discovers the fluid flow equations and publishes *Hydrodynamica*
- First patent on a spinning machine issued.
- Birth of the king's grandson, later George III
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1739

- Jonathan Swift, *Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift*, his last major work
- War of Austrian Succession, also known as the War of Jenkins' Ear and (after 1743) King George's War
- David Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature, Vol. 1*
- Coram's Foundling Hospital founded; major orphanage for London's orphaned and abandoned children
- Bow Street court established; ten years later the successor magistrate, Henry Fielding, started a police and detective force here known as the "Bow Street Runners"
- Dick Turpin, notorious highwayman, hanged
- John Winthrop, *Notes on Sunspot Observations*
- Methodist societies established in Bristol and London
- First performances of Handel's *Saul* and *Israel in Egypt*

- Crown Prince Frederick of Prussia (later "Frederick the Great") publishes *Anti-Machiavell*
- Extreme and extended cold weather leads to famine in Ireland two years later

1740

- Slave rebellion in Charleston, S. C. Fifty are hanged.
- Anson begins his circumnavigation of the globe
- Franklin founds the University of Pennsylvania
- Richardson, *Pamela*
- War of Austrian Succession
- George Whitefield parts company with John and Samuel Wesley; all three continue their evangelical missions
- Typhoid fever epidemics in Ireland and Germany
- Rediscovery of process of making crucible steel, a much stronger alloy
- Grain exports embargoed because of laboring class riots
- Pope Clement XII succeeded by Pope Benedict XIV
- Hume, *Treatise on Human Nature*, vol. III
- Parliament allows naturalization of colonists after seven years
- Frederick of Prussia founds the Berlin Academy of Science

1741

- David Garrick performs in London for the first time, as Richard III
- Charles Macklin performs Shylock for the first time
- Elizabeth Lucas, in South Carolina, begins the cultivation of indigo, the foundation of the dyestuffs industry
- Jonathan Edwards, in Enfield, Massachusetts [later Connecticut], preaches "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God"
- Celsius temperature scale invented
- Hume, *Essays Moral and Political*
- Slave Revolt in New York African American timeline

1742

- Robert Walpole is forced to resign after twenty-one years as Britain's first "prime minister"
- Cotton "factories" are established at Birmingham and Wolverhampton. But see 1769
- Fielding, *Joseph Andrews*
- Hoyle, *A Short Treatise on Whist*
- The Franklin stove invented (variously credited to years from 1740-1748)
- Hereford breed of cattle developed by Benjamin Tomkins
- Handel's *Messiah*, first London performance
- John Wesley, *Character of a Methodist*

1743

- For the last time a British sovereign commands troops in battle (George II, Battle of Dettingen)

- Celsius scale invented
- The first elevator is built, for Louis XV
- Roads are included in John Speed's *Atlas*
- Devon and Exeter Hospital opens--charity hospital
- Gin riots against restrictions on purchase of gin
- Treaty of Worms [Worms is a place] creates alliance among Great Britain, Austria, and Sardinia
- Death of Johnson's friend Richard Savage, satirist and abolitionist
- Henry Pelham becomes Prime Minister
- Princess Louisa marries Fredrik V, future king of Norway and Denmark
- Hogarth's *Marriage a la Mode* series completed
- Playwright Hannah (Parkhouse) Cowley born, 14 March 1743

1744

- France declares war on England and Austria
- George Berkeley, *Philosophical Reflections Concerning Tarwater*
- Death of Alexander Pope
- Johnson's *Life of Richard Savage*

1745

- Death of Jonathan Swift
- Jacobite Rebellion attempts to restore the Stuart dynasty to the English throne; the "Young Pretender," Prince Charles Edward Stuart, is supported by Scottish Highlanders
- Hogarth, *Marriage a la Mode*
- Johnson, "Observations on the Tragedy of *Macbeth*" and "Proposals for a new edition of Shakespeare"
- *God Save the King* first performed in Britain, honoring the Stuart Pretender, not George II
- France takes the Austrian Netherlands at the Battle of Fontenoy
- Charles Bonnet demonstrates that annelid worms can regenerate themselves
- Von Kleist invents the "Leyden Jar," a precursor of the electrical capacitor

1746

- The Jacobite rebels are defeated by the Duke of Cumberland
- William Pitt (the elder) becomes Prime Minister
- George Whitfield, *The Full Account of God's Dealings with George Whitfield*

1747

- Scottish naval surgeon, Dr. James Lind, finds a cure for scurvy.
- David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*
- The last beheading in England: Simon, Lord Lovat (Jacobite rebel)
- Bach, *A Musical Offering*
- Samuel Foote, satirical mimic, establishes himself as a solo comic actor, a "stand-up comedian"
- Carriage tax

- Dress Act forbidding Scottish Highlanders to wear their national dress passed
- David Garrick begins as theatre manager, Theatre Royal Drury Lane Garrick serves as manager and lead actor until 1766 and continued as manager until 1776.
- Samuel Foote acquires the Theatre Royal Haymarket (theatre dates back to 1720)

1748

- John Fothergill, "Account of the Sore Throat attended with Ulcer," first scientific description of diphtheria
- Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle ends the War of Austrian Succession
- Richardson, *Clarissa*
- Bach, *Art of the Fugue*
- Death of James Thomson
- Euler's *Introduction in analysis infinitorum* introduces methods of mathematical notation still in use today

1749

- Fielding, *Tom Jones*
- Johnson, *The Vanity of Human Wishes*
- Johnson's *Irene* performed at Drury Lane
- Georges Buffon, *Historie Naturelle*, an encyclopedic, secular study of the physical world
- David Hartley, *Observations on Man*, landmark work in the history of psychology
- The *Monthly Review* begins publication
- a "classic" pornographic novel, Cleland's *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*, published
- Prime minister reduces the interest payments on the national debt
- The Georgia colony reverses itself and declares slavery legal
- Actress and playwright, Elizabeth Griffith's Dublin debut, 13 October, performing as Juliet to Thomas Sheridan's ageing Romeo at the Smock Alley Theatre. She specialized in tragic roles including Jane Shore and Cordelia in *King Lear*.

1750

- Rousseau, *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*, the idea of the "noble savage"
- East India Company's trade with India popularizes tea
- Johnson begins publishing *The Rambler* essays
- Death of Bach
- Opening of Westminster Bridge
- The Iron Act protects British iron industry at the expense of the American iron industry
- London experiences two minor earthquakes
- Typhoid fever epidemic in London
- Fashionable new neighborhood, Hanover Square, is completed
- The waltz becomes fashionable
- City of London Lying-In Hospital founded
- Playwright Margravine of Anspach, Elizabeth Craven born 17 December 1750. Also known as Lady Elizabeth Berkeley, Princess Berkeley. Wrote numerous fables, pantomimes and farces performed in London

1751

- Hume, *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*
- Children's clothing not based on adult fashions is developed
- Baron Cronstedt discovers the element nickel
- In a Royal (charitable) hospital, an aqueduct to bring water for laundry and for the infectious latrines was installed
- The future George III becomes Prince of Wales

1752

- Franklin conducts his "kite" experiment proving that lightning is electricity
- England finally adopts the reformed calendar, losing 10 days in September (i.e., if you were born on September 7 O.S. your new birthday was September 18)
- Playwright Fanny Burney (Frances Burney, married name D'Arblay) born 13 June 1752
- Elizabeth Griffiths writes *Theodorick, King of Denmark* alone and pregnant with her son, Richard, selling almost 500 copies by subscription (probably raising about 25 pounds).

1753

- Jewish Naturalization Bill passed
- Common-law marriage abolished
- British Library and British Museum established by Act of Parliament
- James Lind, *Treatise of the Scurvy*
- Edward Moore, *The Gamester*
- Samuel Richardson, *The History of Sir Charles Grandison*
- Claud Geoffrey identifies bismuth as a chemical element
- Death of George Berkeley
- Beatification of the patron saint of students and (later) air travelers, St. Joseph of Copertino
- Swedish Academy of Letters founded
- Playwright Sophia Burrell born, 11 April 1753
- Elizabeth Griffith joins the Covent Garden Theatre Company in March, playing only minor characters.
- Playwright and Actress Elizabeth Inchbald (nee Simpson) born 15 October 1753.

1754

- Thomas Warton, *Observations on the Faerie Queene of Spenser*
- Rousseau, *Discours sur l'origine de l'inegalite des hommes*
- Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews, Scotland, founded
- George Washington was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel for services in the French and Indian War, which begins 1754.
- Actress and Playwright Hannah Brand born, 19 November 1754

1755

- Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language*
- Fanny Abington, actress and fashion leader, debuts at the Haymarket Theatre

- The first British naval vessel on Lake Ontario is launched (suggestion of Benjamin Franklin)
- Charles Perry, *Mechanical Account and Explication of the Hysterical Passion and of all other Nervous Disorders Incident to the Sex, with an Appendix on Cancers*. Pioneering treatise on women's medicine (other than obstetrics).
- Tsarina Elizabeth establishes the University of Moscow
- Harvard burned a stuffed bird that was rotting away--the last remaining specimen of the extinct Dodo
- Acadians of Nova Scotia forced to leave when the British capture Ft. Beausejour--some move to Louisiana. Their story is retold in Longfellow's *Evangeline*
- An earthquake destroys much of the city of Lisbon, an event later used in Voltaire's *Candide* to satirize the idea that this is the "best of all possible worlds" (Leibnitz)
- Frances Barton's (Mrs. Fanny Abington) first appearance on the stage at the Haymarket Theatre as Miranda in Susanna Centlivre's *The Busybody*.
- Elizabeth Griffith pregnant with her second child, forced to quit the stage.

1756

- War declared between France and England.
- In India, a rebellious native prince allegedly imprisons 146 British men, women, and children in one small cell; only 23 survived: the "Black Hole of Calcutta"
- Frederick II (the Great) of Prussia invades Saxony
- John Smeaton, British engineer, builds the first railroad turntable
- Cotton velvet invented
- French begin building Ft. Ticonderoga
- Mayonnaise invented by the chef of the Duc de Richelieu
- Frances Barton (Mrs. Fanny Abington) becomes member of Drury Lane Theatre on the recommendation of Samuel Foote. She debuts as principal on 29 October as Lady Pliant in *the Double Dealer* along with Kitty Clive and Hannah Pritchard.
- Frances Brooke, chief theatre critic for *Old Maid*, a weekly periodical that ran from 15 Nov 1755-24 July 1756: Brooke was responsible for the comment on David Garrick's use of Nahum Tate's 'wretched alteration of *King Lear*', instead of 'Shakespeare's excellent original' (*Old Maid*, 13 March 1756), that so distressed Garrick that he was still writing about Mrs Brooke's 'female Spite' towards him nine years later.
- In France Brooke's preface to *Virginia, Tragedy, with Odes, Pastorals, and Translations* (1756) she explained that she had decided to have it printed because she had no hope of its ever being staged, two plays already having been presented 'on the same Subject' and 'Mr. Garrick having declined reading hers until Samuel Crisp's tragedy of the same name was published, an event that occurred in 1754. Smollett wrote one of the most positive reviews, which concluded: 'we have seen very few modern plays superior to the performance, which is truly moral and poetical, and contains many fine strokes of nature: Nor are the subsequent Pastorals and Odes void of merit and propriety' (*Critical Review*, 1, 1756, 276-9).

1757

- The achromatic lens--a double lens which allows sharp images--is invented by John Dolland
- Clive captures India from the French
- John Campbell invents the sextant
- Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*
- Johnson, "Review of Soame Jenyns' *An Enquiry into the Origin of Evil*"
- John Home's *Douglas* is produced
- Admiral Byng is executed for by firing squad aboard HMS Monarch for breach of the Article of War
- The Nawab of Bengal tries to expel the British from India and fails; battle of Plassey
- The Pitt ministry is replaced by a coalition ministry, with Newcastle as Lord Treasurer and Pitt as Secretary of State
- Men's fashions underwent a major transformation, with long trousers replacing knee breeches
- Women's fashions included large hoops, worn even by the lower classes, and "farthingales," that were quickly dropped from ordinary dress but retained in court dress
- Hume, *The Natural History of Religion*
- August 3-9, French and Indian War. French army under Louis-Joseph de Montcalm forces the English to surrender Fort William Henry. The French army's Indian allies slaughter the survivors for unclear reasons.
- Sankey Canal--first man-made water route in England
- Emperor Qian Long's Closed Door Policy bans all westerners from China
- Boucher, "Marquise de Pompadour at the Toilet-Table"
- William Blake born, 28 November
- Colley Cibber dies, 12 November
- Mary Robinson (née Darby) born 27 November 1757(8?). Actress, poet, novelist. Known also as "Perdita" for her role performed in 1779 and as first public mistress of George IV.

1758

- Threshing machine invented
- Henri du Monceau, botanist, describes the structure and physiology of trees
- Women's styles for court included long trains, very wide skirts (sometimes as much as sixteen feet in circumference, and hair styles so high that women had to kneel for their hair to be done and to ride in carriages. The most famous style, the "Belle Poule," included a model of a frigate and decorations including fruits, dolls, feathers, and toys
- Johnson begins the *Idler* (continued through 1760)
- The English are successful in their war against the French in the Colonies, taking Louisbourg and Duquesne (renamed Fort Pitt; now Pittsburg)
- Death of Jonathan Edwards
- Construction of a canal between Liverpool and Leeds begins
- First English manual on guitar playing
- Roger Bosovich, *A Theory of Natural Philosophy*, pioneering study in field theory
- Diderot, *Le pere de famille*
- Boucher, "The Mill at Charenton" (painting)
- Appearance of Halley's comet
- First forgery of English banknotes

- John Z. Holwell, survivor's account of "The Black Hole of Calcutta"
- John Hoppner, English portrait painter, born 4 April
- French Revolutionary Maximilien Robespierre born, 6 May
- American lexicographer Noah Webster born, 16 October
- Foote procured a royal license to exhibit plays during the four months in each year, May to September (during his lifetime)
- Charlotte Ramsay Lennox publishes *Angelica; or Quixote in petticoats. A comedy in two acts.* And *Philander. A dramatic pastoral by the author of The female Quixote.*

1759

- Voltaire, *Candide*.
- English capture Quebec.
- Death of Handel
- The British Museum opens to the public
- Johnson, *Rasselas*
- Teacups with handles adopted throughout Europe
- Halley's Comet returns as predicted (first spotted days earlier, in late 1758, in Germany)
- English capture Ft. Niagara
- "Caucasian" first used to designate persons of central and western European descent (by Johann Friedrich Blumenbach)
- Canal network begun by Francis Egerton, third Duke of Bridgewater. His canal led from coal mines directly to Manchester and Liverpool, bypassing river tolls and leading to major reductions in coal prices
- Josiah Wedgwood founds the Wedgwood pottery company, 1 May
- George Washington marries Martha Dandridge Custis, 6 January
- 11 January, the first American life insurance company incorporated in Philadelphia, PA
- British troops under Jeffrey Amherst take Fort Ticonderoga 27 July (French and Indian War)
- Writer Mary Wollstonecraft born 27 April
- Frances Barton marries her music teacher, James Abington, a royal trumpeter, and afterwards is mentioned on playbills as "Mrs. Abington."
- Actress Elizabeth Farren, Lady Derby, born.

1760

- The official end of the current war against France is signalled by raising the British flag over Detroit
- Great Fire of Boston destroys 349 buildings, 20 March
- Thomas Braidwood opens the first British school for the deaf and mute
- George II is succeeded by his grandson, George III, 25 October
- Photometry is invented
- Roller skates are invented by Joseph Merlin
- Thomas Braidwood opens the first British school for the deaf
- Kew Botanical Gardens opened
- Tackey's War or Tackey's Rebellion, an uprising of black African slaves occurs in Jamaica in May, June and July. Most significant slave rebellion in the Caribbean until the Haitian Revolution in 1790.

1761

- Mikhael Lomonosov observes the atmosphere of Venus
- George III marries Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz (Queen Charlotte) 8 September
- Slave trade to and within Portugal is forbidden, 19 September
- Bridgewater Canal between Liverbook and Leeds opened
- Agricultural machines are displayed in London in an exhibition of the Society of the Arts--such exhibitions eventually lead to our "world's fairs"
- Writer Samuel Richardson dies 4 July
- Erasmus Darwin prescribes massive quantities of opium in his medical practice
- "Nuptial Bounty" for poor girls who married and stayed married for at least a year provided by some ladies in Gloucester, to encourage marriage in the laboring class
- Marie Tussaud, French wax modeler, born 1 December.

1762

- The first discovery of the role of microorganisms("germs") is made by Marc Plenciz
- Rousseau, *The Social Contract*
- Catherine II becomes empress of Russia 9 July
- British forces occupy Manilla and capture Buenos Aires
- John Montagu, Fourth Earl of Sandwich, invents the sandwich. Or was this in 1778?
- Registration of pauper children required, in the hope of discouraging workhouse masters from simply letting them die
- James Stuart and Nicholas Revett, *Antiquities of Athens*, leads to fashion shift from Palladian to neoclassical decoration and architecture
- Michael Combrune begins using a thermometer in brewing, a sign of the new alliance of the "exact" sciences and industry
- Playwright Joanna Baillie born 11 September 1762

1763

- Treaty of Paris ends the Seven Years War and Frances cedes Canada to Great Britain; Royal Proclamation of 1763 is issued by King George III, restricting American settlement westward.
- Joseph Haydn writes Symphony No. 13
- Wilkes's *North Briton*, No. 45 published; leads to his arrest for sedition
- Proclamation of 1763 forbade further English settlement across the Appalachian Mountains because of conflict between colonists and Iroquois.
- British gain control of Florida in exchange for Havana, Cuba
- Hargreaves invents the Spinning Jenny
- Actress Sarah Gardner (nee Chevney or Cheney) first appeared at Drury Lane Theatre on 1 October 1763 under her maiden name, Miss Cheney, playing Miss Prue in William Congreve's *Love for Love*.

1764

- January 19 John Wilkes is expelled from the House of Commons and flees to Paris
- London houses are numbered for the first time

- Voltaire, *Dictionnaire philosophique*
- Colonies forbidden to issue paper money
- The Sugar Act, regulating sugar trade, passed, leading to colonial discontent
- Death of Hogarth
- Sugar Act is passed 6 April; city of St. Louis is established
- St. Louis founded in what would later be Missouri by Pierre Laclede and Auguste Chouteau
- Mrs Abington returns to Drury Lane Theatre at the pressing invitation of David Garrick, where she remains for eighteen years.
- Sarah Gardner (nee Miss Cheney) on 13 January 1764 she played Rose in George Farquhar's *The Recruiting Officer*, and on 20 October 1764 she performed Miss Prue again.
- Elizabeth Griffith returns to London with two plays, *Amana*, a tragedy and *The Platonic Wife*, a comedy. *The Platonic Wife* was taken for immediate production at Drury Lane Theatre, premiering 24 January 1765.

## 1765

- James Watt invents an improvement for the steam engine, the condenser
- Johnson publishes his edition of *The Works of William Shakespeare*, notable for its criticism of the "three unities," its development of the concept of dramatic illusion, its recognition of the relative importance of various sources in establishing an author's text, and the wit and wisdom of its preface and notes. All subsequent "variorum" editions of Shakespeare derive, in some degree, from this edition.
- The potato becomes a popular staple food, almost the only food of the poor in Ireland
- The "Rockingham Whigs" come to power
- Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, the first "Gothic" novel
- Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, vol. 1. Based on a series of lectures, this history and analysis of English common and statute law became a staple for law students and the general public alike. There were eventually 4 volumes.
- Lazzaro Spallanzani discover hermetic sealing as a means of preserving food (e.g., canning)
- The Stamp Act, one of the revenue acts leading to the American Revolution, is passed 22 March; Quartering Act passed 24 March
- First American medical school, the College and Academy of Philadelphia, opens
- Ship's chronometer invented by Pierre Leroy (Paris)
- Edmund Burke elected to Parliament for the first time
- Quartering Act passed, requiring American colonists to provide housing for British soldiers
- Daughters of Liberty, first women's club to boycott British goods, formed
- Susannah Cibber's final performance was at Drury Lane Theatre, Thursday 5 December 1765 performing the role of Lady Bruce in John Vanbrugh's *The Provoked Wife* in the presence of George III and Queen Charlotte.
- Sarah Gardner (nee Miss Cheney) was the original actress to play Mrs Mechlin in Samuel Foote's comedy *The Commissary*, at the Haymarket on 10 June 1765. Married William Gardner, "and inferior actor" at the Covent Garden Theatre in the summer. She made her debut at Covent Garden Theatre on 19 October as Polly in George Coman's *Polly Honeycombe*. On 19 November she played her favourite part of Miss Prue

1766

- Henry Cavendish discovers nitrogen produced in soil by lightning, leading to the understanding of the role of nitrogen in plant nutrition
- The Royal Theatre opens in Bristol
- High bread prices cause riots
- The Grand Trunk Canal from the Trent to the Mersey river is begun, to allow water passage from the Irish Sea to the North Sea
- The Declaratory Act asserts Parliament's authority over the Colonies "in all cases whatsoever"; previously, local legislatures had had or assumed the power to make certain decisions without Parliament's consent
- George Stubbs, *The Anatomy of the Horse*, important artistically as well as scientifically
- John Spilsbury produces the first jigsaw puzzle, a colored map of Europe. This firm is still in business today.
- The first paved footpath (sidewalk): Westminster, London
- The Stamp Act is repealed 18 March
- Rust ruins the Italian wheat crop
- Beginning of survey of the Mason-Dixon line
- The Treaty of Oswego ends a war with Native Americans
- Tissot, *Essay on the Disorders of People of Fashion*, exceptionally useful self-help medical book
- Catherine the Great grants freedom of worship in Russia
- Samuel Foote, Haymarket Theatre manager/owner gains a royal patent to play legitimate drama (spoken drama as opposed to operas, concerts, or plays with music) in the summer months.
- Actress and singer Susannah Maria Cibber (nee Arne) dies 30 January 1766, aged 51.
- Sarah Gardner on 15 March 1766 performed as Belinda in George Etherege's *The Man of Mode*, on 15 April as Jenny Private in *The Fair Quaker of Deal*, and on 26 April she was the original Fanny in Thomas Hull's *All in the Right*. In the seasons that followed at Covent Garden (1767–74) she performed a modest repertory of comic roles, which were not well received by the critics.
- Elizabeth Griffith produces *The Double Mistake*, a great success playing 12 performances and concluding with a royal command performance.

1767

- Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon complete their survey of the Mason-Dixon line, later the dividing line between the Union and the Confederacy in the American Civil War (1861-1865)
- The Townsend Act, placing duties (taxes) on lead, glass, and *tea* is introduced in Parliament
- Joseph Priestley, *The History and Present State of Electricity*
- Samuel Wallis discovers Tahiti
- Daniel Boone goes through the Cumberland Gap and reaches Kentucky, in defiance of the Royal Proclamation of 1763.
- British Nautical Almanac founded
- Priestley invents carbonated water

1768

- James Cook, Captain of the *Endeavour*, begins his voyages of exploration in the Pacific (1768-1771)
- Blackstone's *Commentaries* are completed
- Philip Astley forms the first modern circus
- Joshua Reynolds founds and becomes the first president of the Royal Academy of Arts
- The first edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* is begun in Edinburgh. Published in weekly parts, it is edited by botanist William Smellie and supported by a "Society of Gentlemen"
- The Liverpool Conversation Club begins to discuss the merits of secret ballots
- An immigration wave from Eastern Europe increases the Jewish population in England threefold
- Richard Arkwright invents the spinning frame
- Colonial boycott of British luxury goods in protest of the Townshend Act (1767)
- Massachusetts Assembly is dissolved for refusing to assist in the collection of taxes; Boston citizens refuse to quarter British troops
- First Russo-Turkish war begins
- Philip Astley stages the first modern circus, with acrobats on galloping horses in London.
- Playwright Barbarina Brand (nee Ogle), Lady Dacre born 9 May 1769
- Playwright Margaret Harvey born (published *Raymond de Percy, or, The Tenant of the Tomb: a Romantic Melodrama* in 1822)

1769

- James Cook arrives in Tahiti on the ship HM Bark Endeavor. Eventually reaches Australia and New Zealand
- Richard Arkwright patents a water-operated spinning frame, a key invention of the Industrial Revolution
- James Watt patents first practical steam engine, an event which inaugurates the Industrial Revolution in Great Britain.
- Attacks on corruption in government by "Junius" appear as "Letters in *The Public Advertiser*"
- Architects Robert and James Adam complete the Royal Society of Arts Building
- Mary Ellen Bowes (or Eleanor, born 24 Feb 1749) published poetical drama, a tragedy called *The Siege of Jerusalem*. Upon the death of her father in 1760, Mary became the wealthiest heiress in Britain, possibly even in Europe.
- Elizabeth Griffith produces *The School for Rakes*, an extremely popular play that earned Elizabeth enough money to pay for her son's entry into the East India Company.

1770

- The Tory ministry of Lord North takes office
- The printers and publishers of the "Letters of Junius" are tried for seditious libel; the author's identity has never been authoritatively determined
- Crime has noticeably increased in London
- Boston Massacre, 5 March; five Americans are shot by British troops

- James Cook anchors near present city Sydney, Australia. Because Joseph Banks, a young botanist discovers 30,000 specimens of plant life in the bay, Cook calls the place Botany Bay.
- 14 year old Marie Antoinette arrives at French court 7 May; marries Louis Auguste (later Louis XVI) 16 May; fireworks at the wedding cause a fire, killing 132 people.
- Popular children's book, *London Cries*, about the oral advertisements of all the London tradespeople, published
- 16 December, presumed date of Ludwig van Beethoven's birth
- William Wordsworth born, 7 April

1771

- Benjamin West insists that the "Death of Wolfe" should be painted in contemporary British uniform as opposed to ancient armor.
- In his *Farmer's Letters*, Arthur Young deplors the 'rural exodus' which was to continue into the 19th century.
- Arkwright's first spinning-mill
- Plague in Moscow kills 57,000
- Current electricity is produced by Luigi Galvani.
- Johnson, *Thoughts on the Late Transactions Respecting Falklands Islands*.
- An Irish priest convicted of acting as a priest received a Royal Pardon on condition that he leave the country
- Death of Thomas Gray.
- Death of Christopher Smart
- Sir Joshua Reynolds paints Frances Abington as "Miss Prue"



Sir Joshua Reynolds, Frances Abington as "Miss Prue." 1771.

1772

- First nationwide banking system anywhere established in Scotland
- First Partition of Poland
- Sommersett, a slave brought to England, is freed in a landmark case, on the grounds that England "does not authorize so high an act of dominion as slavery"
- Toleration Act, designed to remove some of the restrictions on non-Anglicans ministers and schoolmasters, fails in Parliament
- A private Act of Parliament restored the inheritance of Catholic heiress Anne Benison Fenwick.
- Elizabeth Griffith produces *A Wife in the Right*, domestic and sentimental comedy. Produced at Covent Garden it was a failure owing to the management of George Colman and the drunkenness of the actor, Ned Shuter, who failed to learn his lines.
- Actress Elizabeth Inchbald heads to London to try to become an actress. Marries Joseph Inchbald, an actor; some claim this was not a romantic love but a way for Elizabeth to gain a protected entrance into her chosen profession. Married 9 June 1772. Immediately went to Bristol where her husband had engagements and made her debut as Cordelia to his *Lear* on 4 September 1772. Toured around Scotland 1772-1776 with West Digge's

theatre company acting in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen. Despite her determined practising, walking the hills and shores with her husband listening to her recitals, Inchbald was never a very good actress, but she continued to perform a variety of roles and to supplement her wages by 'walking on' in the pantomime. The touring life was a hard one: travelling, they were caught in storms and had to walk long distances in the rain, and her health was undermined by the consequent attacks of ague and fever. Her marriage was difficult, too. She did not enjoy her role as stepmother to her husband's illegitimate son Robert, whose mother is not known. Robert was in the same company playing children's roles, and Elizabeth insisted on his lodging separately from the couple in Edinburgh. Her husband also had another, older son, George, whose mother may or may not have been the same as Robert's. Elizabeth and her husband quarrelled over money and her independence: he objected to her receiving her own salary separately from his, and to her friendships with other men, and she objected to his drinking sessions with friends.

1773

- Samuel Johnson and James Boswell tour the Hebrides; each writes a book about the tour
- Oliver Goldsmith, *She Stoops to Conquer* opens
- The first cast-iron bridge (but see 1779 and 1781)
- The Boston Tea-Party (December)
- Captain James Cook crosses the Antarctic Circle
- An Act regulating Lying-In Hospitals and the Settlement of Bastard Children--early attempt to reform care of poor pregnant women
- General Turnpike Act passed, attempting to improve toll roads
- Medical Society of London formed
- Phillis Wheatley's *Poems on Various Subjects*, the first published book by an African American
- Helvetius, *De l'homme*
- Hester Capone, *Letters on Improvement of the Mind*
- William Blake's first painting, "Joseph of Arimathea"
- Regulating Act for India passed, limiting the powers of the East India company and establishing a dual system of control over India
- May 1773, Frances Brooke joined the ranks of theatre administrators when she, James Brooke, Mary Ann Yates, the distinguished actress who had become a close friend, and her husband, Richard Yates, purchased the King's Theatre, Haymarket. They ran this establishment until 1778, when they sold it to Thomas Harris and Richard Brinsley Sheridan. It was this experience that finally helped open the London stage to Mrs Brooke's own plays.

1774

- Mt. Vesuvius erupts
- Joseph Priestly (England) and Karl Scheele (Germany) independently discover oxygen
- J.G. Gahn discover magnesium
- F. A. Mesmer first uses hypnotism as a medical treatment ("mesmerism")
- Parliament passes the "Coercive Acts" in response to the Boston Tea Party
- Westminster General Dispensary opens: clinic for the poor that lasted for 182 years
- Sarah Siddons, great actress, has her first success

- The first comprehensive Marine Atlas published
- Sir Robert Clive, possibly the richest Englishman who ever lived, kills himself after having been attacked in Parliament for his conduct in India. He had been exonerated, but committed suicide anyway.
- Goldsmith, *She Stoops to Conquer*
- Goethe, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*
- Johnson, *The Patriot*

1775

- British Parliament proclaims that Massachusetts is in revolt, and the first shots are fired at Lexington: the American revolution is under way
- Europeans discover San Francisco Bay
- Benjamin Franklin becomes the first Postmaster General for the future United States
- George III issues an order intended to protect women and children from the worst aspects of working in coal and salt mines
- The Second Continental Congress opens
- Thomas Paine publishes an anti-slavery article and helps to form the first anti-slavery society in America.
- First medical use of digitalis, as a diuretic, not for heart problems
- Paul Revere's ride
- First Thames regatta
- Bank Clearing House established in Lombard Street in London
- Burke, *On Conciliation with the Colonies*
- New England Restraining Act banned trade between the New England colonies and any country other than Great Britain
- Garrick commissions James and Robert Adams to renovate interior of Theatre Royal Drury Lane. Additions include ornate ceiling and stucco façade facing Bridge Street.
- Elizabeth Griffith writes an ambitious work of dramatic criticism: *The Morals of Shakespeare's Drama Illustrated*, dedicated to David Garrick and citing Elizabeth Montagu's work as inspirational.

1776

- Abigail Adams write to her husband John asking that he and the other men who were at work on the Declaration of Independence "remember the ladies." Nevertheless, the Declaration reads, "all men are created equal."
- July 4--the Continental Congress ratifies the Declaration of Independence
- Britain responds in force to the American rebellion; Franklin seeks help in Paris, and George Washington emerges as leader of the American forces
- The first submarine is used in warfare. It was equipped with a drill to penetrate the enemy's hull, plant a bomb, and retreat. The sub worked; the drill didn't.
- Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, founding text of modern economics
- Battle of Trenton--colonial victory
- First running of the St. Leger Stakes, a famous horse race. Won by Allabaculia
- Parliamentary Reform Bill, proposed by John Wilkes, rejected
- Richard Price, *Observations on Civil Liberty and the War with America*
- David Garrick leaves stage with a series of farewell performances. Sold his shares in the theatre to Irish playwright Richard Brinsley Sheridan. Sheridan and his partners completed purchase of Drury Lane two years later and Sheridan owned it until 1809.

- Mary Robinson (married to Thomas Robinson) played Juliet at Drury Lane Theatre in December. She is best known for her “breeches parts”; Viola in *Twelfth Night* and Rosalind in *As You Like It*.
- Frances Burney, playwright, born in January 1776, niece to novelist and diarist Frances Burney, Madame D’Arblay.
- Hannah Cowley’s first play, *The Runaway*, performed on Drury Lane Theatre 15 February. Sarah Siddons played starring role and it was a “smash hit,” highlighting the injustice of arranged marriages. Particularly earnestly debated throughout London society was the outburst by a young female character regarding the marriage vow ‘to love, honour and obey’; ‘I won’t hear of it, “love” one might manage that perhaps, but “honour, obey”!—, tis strange the ladies had never interest enough to get this ungallant form amended’. This was near-heresy at the time.
- Elizabeth Inchbald and her husband get a theatrical engagement with Younger in Liverpool. Here she met Sarah Siddons, who became a lifelong friend, and her brother, John Philip Kemble. The Inchbalds continued to change companies, moving to Dimond’s company in Canterbury, where Elizabeth acted with Thomas Holcroft, and then to Yorkshire company led by Tate Wilkinson. She continued acting for Wilkinson after her husband died suddenly in 1779.

1777

- Sheridan's *The School for Scandal* opens at Drury Lane
- Cook discovers the Hawaiian Islands
- Dispensaries offering medicine and medical care to the poor are opened in London and Surrey
- Burgoyne's defeat strengthens American position in war with England
- John Howard makes the case for prison reform in *The State of Prisons*
- Women forbidden in visitors' gallery in Parliament
- Richard Sheridan premiered his own comedy of manners, *The School for Scandal*. \*\* Mrs Abington plays “Lady Teazle” in Richard Sheridan’s *School for Scandal* at the Drury Lane Theatre
- Samuel Foote in difficulties, sells both the Haymarket Theatre and the patent to George Colman, Sr, 16 January 1777.
- First London appearance of Elizabeth Farren as Miss Hardcastle in *She Stoops to Conquer*.
- Actress Sarah Gardner wrote a comedy, *The Advertisement, of a Bold Stroke for a Husband*, performed at the Haymarket Theatre on 9 August. *The Female Dramatist* is also attributed to Sarah Gardner and to George Colman, Jr. 27 April it had been submitted to George Colman by Gardner under the title *The Matrimonial Advertisement*. Estranged from her husband, Sarah Gardner went to the West Indies in 1777 and stayed there until 1781 or 1782.

1778

- Bramah invents the valve-and-siphon flushing system, "the basis of all future toilet plumbing"
- Dispensary opened in Middlesex
- The Sandwich? See 1762
- American-French alliance
- Some Catholic political disadvantages are removed in England and Ireland

- Towers of powdered hair are at the height of their popularity

1779

- Gibraltar is besieged by French and Spanish forces; supplies are cut off by naval blockade
- Samuel Crompton invents the "mule," a machine to spin high-quality cotton yarn in large quantities, making possible the simpler fashions of the Regency period
- Spinning mills are operational in Scotland
- The first bridge made completely of iron is begun. It is still in service (built by John Wilkinson, over the Severn).
- First children's hospital opened in London
- Johann Peter Frank begins publication of the first major work on public health and hygiene
- First *Medical Directory* published
- Birmingham General Hospital founded
- Hume, *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*
- Ft. Sackville captured by American colonists under Colonel George Rogers Clark.
- Mary Robinson plays "Perdita" for the first time (adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*) During this performance she attracted the notice of young Prince of Wales, George IV, who eventually offered her 20,000 pounds to become his mistress. Now socially prominent, Robinson became a trend-setter in London.
- Hannah Cowley's *Whose the Dupe?*, comedy, performed Drury Lane Theatre 10 May. It depicts the plight of another near-victim of an arranged marriage, this time revolving around the relative educational attainments of the heroine's suitors. At one point, exasperated with her father's choice of Gradus, a dry-as-dust product of 'Brazen-nose', Elizabeth protests 'The education given to women shuts us entirely from such refined acquaintance'.
- Hannah Cowley's first tragedy, *Albina*, was staged at the Haymarket Theatre in July; a theatre more used to comedy, it was not a success.
- Elizabeth Griffith produces *The Times*, a domestic and sentimental comedy. It contained a moralistic warning against the dangers of gambling, and was a moderate success, running for nine performances. Critics were lukewarm in their praise, objecting to Griffith's use of satire as unbecoming for a woman.

1780

- Steel pens begin to replace quills
- James Watt invents a paper copier, using a special ink that stayed wet for 24 hours, permitting another sheet to be printed by placing it on top of the already printed copy
- Major Cartwright founds the Society for Constitutional Relief, one of the first societies seeking voting reform. He sought universal male suffrage.
- The Gordon Riots, protesting relief measures for Roman Catholics
  - 290 dead
  - 100 buildings burned and/or looted
  - £100,000 damages
  - 25 ringleaders hanged
  - Lord George Gordon, the instigator, tried by the House of Lords for treason, found "not guilty" and released without penalty

- Bentham, *Introduction to Principles of Morals and Legislation*. Foundation of "Utilitarian" philosophy.
- Revival of the Sunday School movement--literacy and arithmetic as well as religion taught
- Hannah Cowley's *The Belle's Stratagem*, (possibly Cowley's masterpiece), dedicated to Queen Charlotte, was performed at Covent Garden Theatre 22 February. It was immensely popular with actors and actresses. Doricourt was played by 'Gentleman' Lewis, Charles Kemble, and later Sir Henry Irving; Letitia by Miss Younge, Dorothy Jordan, and Ellen Terry.

1781

- Herschel discovers Uranus, the first modern planetary discovery
- The American Revolution ends, with the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown. British troops remain in America.
- Volumes II and III of Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* are published, ending with the total defeat of the Roman Empire in Europe. Parallels to America are immediately noted.
- The world's first completely iron bridge completed
- Frances Brooke's *The Siege of Sinope*, tragedy based on Santi's opera *Mitridate Sinope*, staged at Theatre Royal, Covent Garden (31 Jan-19 Feb). Irish edition published 1781.
- Elizabeth Inchbald's first farces submitted to theatre managers Harris and Colman were refused. Eventually *The Mogul Take*, submitted to Colman under an assumed name was accepted.
- George IV ends affair with "Perdita"/Mary Robinson, refusing to pay promised sum.



Caricature of the Prince of Wales as Florizel and Mary Robinson as Perdita, 1783.

1782

- Newgate Prison is opened. John Howard tours this and other prisons and urges prison reform
- Peace talks between the Colonies and Britain begin in Paris
- James Watt patents a double-acting steam engine, one that can be used to power many different types of machiner
- Josiah Wedgwood invents the "pyrometer," a device to measure the temperature of pottery furnaces, revolutionizing the pottery business
- William Cowper, *Poems*
- New "Poor Law," establishing workhouses, passed
- Cornwallis defeated at Yorktown--major turning point in American Revolution
- England acquires the Mysore district in India
- Mrs Abington leaves Drury Lane Theatre for Covent Garden Theatre where she remained until 1790. Elizabeth Farren succeeds Mrs. Abington as comic actress in Drury Lane Theatre. Elizabeth Farren's most popular roles were Lady Betty Modish, Lady Townly, Lady Fanciful and Lady Teazle.

- France Brooke's *Rosina* first performed at Covent Garden 31 December 1782, an immediate and lasting success, produced 201 times in the last two decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.
- Having returned from the West Indies, Sarah Gardner performs as Mrs Cadwallader in Foote's *The Author* at the Haymarket, which may have been her first London stage appearance for some years.

1783

- Treaty of Versailles officially ends the American Revolution
- William Blake, *Poetical Sketches*
- The Brothers Montgolfier launch the first manned hot-air balloon
- Death of Lancelot "Capability" Brown, who had revolutionized landscape gardening
- Quakers in England petition against the slave trade
- Charles Townshend becomes Home Secretary
- According to the *Rambler Magazine*, a man left £50 each to six virgins, the price that "Mother Douglas had long since established." [Not *Johnson's Rambler!*]
- Mary Robinson suffers mysterious illness that leaves her partially paralyzed.
- Hannah Cowley's *A Bold Stroke for a Husband*, performed at Covent Garden Theatre 1783

1784

- General election. Pitt (the younger) becomes Prime Minister, defeating Charles Fox
- Pitt's India Act gives the crown the power to "guide" Indian politics
- Death of Samuel Johnson
- John Wesley, *Deed of Declaration* (Methodism)
- Lavoisier studies the interaction between oxygen and carbon dioxide in respiration
- Hannah Cowley's *More Ways than One* performed Covent Garden Theatre
- Harriet Horncastle Hook (nee Madden) wrote the comedy, *The Double Disguise*, performed 1784-1788; it was also published in 1784
- Elizabeth Inchbald's play, *The Mogul's Tale*. The play is about three English characters fly to the Orient in a balloon; the topical interest of balloon ascents helped make the play popular, and it had a good run at the Little Theatre in the Haymarket in July and August 1784. Inchbald acted in it herself—stammering with nerves on the first night—and, once its success was assured, declared her authorship and took applause for it from the stage. Colman paid her 100 guineas for the farce, and agreed to accept a comedy she had sent him previously, which he altered and put on at the Haymarket as *I'll Tell You What* in 1785.
- Mary Robinson, "Perdita," leaves England having in penury, all of her belongings sold to the highest bidder. Her Gainsborough portrait is sold for just over 30 guineas. Mary leaves for Paris on the Brighton-Dieppe packet ship, accompanied by her lover, Colonel Tarleton, her mother and her daughter, Maria Elizabeth. They arrive in Paris with hardly any money and with Mary in very poor health.

1785

- Cartwright invents the steam powered loom

- James Beauclerc publishes a new version of the Bible
- H.D. Rawlings begins manufacturing soda water in England. See 1791.
- A revolutionary new plow is tested in Berkshire
- John Walter publishes the first *Daily Universal Register*, later and still *The Times*
- Thomas Reid, *Philosophy of Intellectual Powers*
- London and Westminster Bill proposed, to create a metropolitan police force
- Sarah Gardner returned to Jamaica, then traveled to North America, making her debut in New York in 1789.
- Elizabeth Inchbald's play *I'll Tell Uou What* put on at the Haymarket Theatre; this five-act comedy of contemporary life was also a success, and as well as bringing her £300 for three benefit nights, it gave her a fame which increased her value, and her wages, as an actress. From this time on Inchbald became a prolific and highly popular dramatist, whose most successful productions brought high financial rewards.
- Elizabeth Inchbald writes *Appearance is Against Them*, criticized for indecent expressions.

1786

- Henry Nock invents the breech-loading musket
- Hester Lynch, *Anecdotes of Samuel Johnson*
- Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* premieres in Vienna 1 May
- Eden Treaty confirmed by Parliament, reducing many duties on everyday goods
- Experiments with gas lighting inside buildings
- In Ireland gang attacks similar to those of the "Whiteboys" (1761-1781) occurred, underscoring the need for police reform
- First effective threshing machine patented by Andrew Meikle
- Shay's Rebellion begins in Massachusetts 29 August
- A hurricane strikes Barbados, 2 September
- First ship leaves Britain for Botany Bay, Australia; 820/1138 aboard are convicts
- Luigi Galvani experiments with muscle stimulation by applying electrical shocks to frogs--technical achievement at the expense of animals first questioned. See Jonathan Mandelbaum, *The Ambiguous Frog* (Princeton: Princeton U. Press, 1992).
- Hannah Cowley's *A School for Greybeards*, performed at Drury Lane Theatre, was loosely based on Aphra Behn's *The Lucky Chance* (1687)

1787

- Official formation of the Methodist Episcopal Church
- Irish police force establish
- Transportation of criminals to Australia begins
- First comprehensive business register in Ireland, the *Treble Almanack*, begins publication
- Jeremy Bentham invents the Panopticon
- first automated assembly line, Delaware; designed by Oliver Evans
- final English edition of the Catholic "Douay" translation of the Bible for more than 100 years
- Lord Nelson introduces a new method of semaphore to the Royal Navy
- Mozart, *Don Giovanni*
- First regulation of working conditions for chimney sweeps

- Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade formed, by Thomas Clarkson and Granville Sharp
- The future George IV becomes Regent for the incapacitated George III
- Mrs. Esten (Miss Bennett, daughter of author Mrs Bennett and Admiral Pye) debuts in Bath as Belvidera
- Actress Mary Ann Yates dies
- Elizabeth Inchbald produces *Such Things Are*, estimated to earn her 900 pounds. Altogether nineteen of her comedies, sentimental dramas, and farces were performed at the London theatres between 1784 and 1805. Some were original plots; others were translations or adaptations from French plays, which she read in the original, and German ones, which she had to approach through English translations.
- Elizabeth Inchbald writes *All on a Summer;s Day*, a play that was hissed at by audiences and criticized in the reviews for portraying a flirtatious, imprudent wife with sympathy.

1788

- First criminals arrive in Australia--Australia's Foundation Day
- George III's mental illness occasions a crisis over creating a Regency
- First steamboat demonstrated in Scotland
- First act to regulate slave trade, requiring more humane conditions of slave ships
- Ratification of the Constitution of the United States completed
- Sugar prices began to rise
- George Washington becomes the first U.S. President
- January 1: John Walter's *Daily Universal Register* is renamed the *Times*, the oldest continually-operating newspaper in the English-speaking world (the *Daily Universal Register* goes back to the 1750s)
- The first daily evening paper begins publication in May, *Star and Evening Advertiser*
- Gibbon completes *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* with volumes IV-VI, on the Byzantine empire and its competitors
- Marylebone Cricket Club founded; still functioning
- Playwright Frances Brooke dies 23 January
- Frances Brooke's *Marian*, comic opera in two acts about the courtship and marriage of rural couples, first performed at Covent Garden Theatre 22 May 1788.
- Hannah Cowley's *The Fate of Sparta*, eprformed Drury Lane Theatre, based on Plutarch's *Life of Agis*.
- Mary Robinson, "Perdita," returns to England, commencing her literary talents

1789

- July 14--the French revolution begins with the storming of the Bastille
- Blake, *Songs of Innocence*
- Lavoisier, *Elements of Chemistry*--the first modern text on chemistry
- Bentham, *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (Utilitarian philosophy)
- Mozart, *Così fan tutte* (opera)
- La Place, *Laws of the Planetary System*
- In New York City, first convening of the United States Congress
- Playwright Frances Brooke dies 23 January 1789
- Actress and Playwright Sarah Gardner makes her debut on the New York stage in November.

- Elizabeth Inchbald retires from acting (has been acting for 17 years)

1790

- Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*
- Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*
- William Nicholson invents the rotary press
- Lady Charlotte Campbell sets styles in England. Men wear clothes in matching dark colors, not various colors mixed.
- Lavoisier, Table of Chemical Elements (33 items, including two that were not elements)
- First patent law in America
- Miss Broadhurst debuts at Covent-Garden Theatre in the character of Polly in the *Beggar's Opera* at the conclusion of the year.
- Playwright Anne Hughes wrote three closet dramas, *Cordelia*, a tragedy; *Constantia*, a tragedy; and *Aspasia* a tragedy. Each appeared in *Moral Dramas Intended for Private Representation*.

1791

- Sodium carbonate patented by Nicholas Leblanc in France (soda)--see 1785
- Slave uprising in St. Dominigue; sugar prices rise sharply
- Thomas Paine, *The Rights of Man*, Part I
- Burke and Paine write political pamphlets arguing for and against the French Revolution
- Mineralist William Gregor discovers titanium
- George Morland paints *The Stables*; establishes taste for scenes of everyday country life
- Theatre Royal Drury Lane, London's oldest theatre starting in 1663, was demolished under management of Sheridan and rebuilt, opening 12 March 1794. New theatre could accommodate more than 3600 spectators.
- Susanna Rowson publishes *Charlotte Temple: A Tale of Truth*
- Lady Craven's *The Silver Tankard*, a musical farce, produced at the Haymarket Theatre
- Hannah Cowley's *A Day in Turkey, or The Russian Slaves*, performed Covent Garden
- Elizabeth Inchbald writes *Next Door Neighbours*

1792

- Farmer's Almanac first published, by Robert B. Thomas. See next year.
- First use of gas lighting in a home (William Murdock of Cornwall)
- Mass petition for abolition of slavery begins in England
- Sugar boycott
- Arthur Young, *Travels in France*
- Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*
- Paine, *Rights of Man*, II. Indicted for treason; escapes to France
- Architect Henry Holland rebuilds the Theatre Royal Covent Garden auditorium making it deeper and wider, thus increasing capacity.
- Actress Hannah Brand made her debut in January with the Drury Lane Company at the King's Theatre (Opera House) in the Haymarket, in her own tragedy, *Huniades*. The *London Chronicle* (17 January 1792) recorded that "the first of four acts were received with great applause," but the work proved too long for the continued approbation of the audience. The play was withdrawn but a shorter version was reproduced on 2 February

with the title *Agmunda*. This second version was no more successful and Brand vanished from the London stage.

- Elizabeth Inchbald writes *Everyone Has His Fault*; withdraws *The Massacre*, a historical play about the St. Bartholomew's day massacre which made clear the parallels between this subject and events during the French Revolution. It was never performed.

1793

- France declares war on Great Britain (Napoleon)
- Eli Whitney invents the cotton gin
- House of Commons *almost* votes to abolish the British slave trade
- Kant, *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*
- Friendly Societies Act exempts organizations through which the poor were encouraged to save money from the Bubble Act, regulating for-profit enterprises
- Habeas Corpus suspended; Traitorous Correspondence Act; both to prevent support for revolutionary France
- Board of Agriculture established, to encourage scientific farming and increase domestic food production
- Godwin, *Inquiry concerning Political Justice*
- Wordsworth, *An Evening Walk and Descriptive Sketches*
- *During the season 1793-1794 when Drury Lane Theatre was being rebuilt, the Haymarket Theatre was opened under the Drury Lane patent.*
- Miss Burke (or Mrs Burke), *Ward of the Castle* first performed. May be the first Gothic melodrama written by a woman. Given three performances at Covent Garden beginning 24 October 1793. Only songs and choruses were published and the play never revived.
- Elizabeth Inchbald writes *Everyone Has His Fault* and earns 700 pounds.
- Playwright Elizabeth Griffith dies, 5 February 1793.

1794

- Hannah Wilkinson Slater the first woman to receive a patent (for cotton thread?)
- John Dalton discovers color blindness
- The *Farmers' Almanac* begins publication (pub. by Robert Thomas Bailey)
- Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, Songs of Innocence and Experience*
- Paine, *The Age of Reason*
- Edward Stone proposes the bark of the willow--salicylic acid--as a medicine: the source of aspirin
- Erasmus Darwin, *Zoonomia* (Charles Darwin was his grandson)
- William Paley, *A View of the Evidences of Christianity*
- Ann Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* ("rationalized" Gothic novel)
- Powdering of men's hair goes out of fashion, after more than 100 years
- Death of Edward Gibbon
- Coleridge and Southey, *Fall of Robespierre* (play)
- Robert Street patents first practical internal combustion engine
- Haymarket Theatre season known for a "Dreadful Accident" occurring on 3 February 1794 when 20 persons died and many injured owing to a crowd pressing to see the King who was present at the evening's performance
- Theatre Royal Drury Lane reopened 12 March (burned down 1809. Current building opened in 1812).

- George Colman, Sr. dies. George Colman, Jr. takes over Haymarket Theatre. Colman, Jr. is a successful playwright and manager but lives extravagantly finally forced to sell shares to brother-in-law David Morris. For a while Colman managed the theatre from the King's Bench Prison, where he was confined for debt.
- Susanna Rowson, *Slaves in Algiers*, first performed in Philadelphia at the Chestnut Street Theatre; also published.
- Hannah Brand acting in York theatre, playing Lady Townly in Vanbrugh's *The Provoked Husband*. Her performance was derided. That summer she appeared in Liverpool, with no greater success.
- Hannah Cowley's last play, *The Town before you*, performed Covent Garden Theatre; her prologue registers her profound dismay at the slapstick and buffoonery which were taking over the role of playwright and actor in the theatre. Her fascinating picture of late eighteenth-century London depicts a snobbish ne'er-do-well aristocrat, a clever con-man, an up-from-country social climber, and, most importantly, a much-maligned woman sculptor, Lady Horatia Horton, who has dared to found her own successful studio and whose statues are roundly condemned as unlikelike by a bogus connoisseur and denigrated by her fiancé's father.

1795

- Government attempts to limit freedom of assembly and speech by a Royal Proclamation and the "Gagging Acts": bills against "Seditious Meetings and Treasonable Practices"
- Joseph Bramah invents the hydrolic press
- France adopts the metric system
- Condorcet, *On the Progress of Human Reason*
- Paine, *Age of Reason*, Part II
- Wordsworth meets Coleridge
- Haydn, London Symphony
- Susanna Rowson, publishes *The Volunteer and The Female Patriot*; performed at the Chestnut Street Theatre (President Washington is alleged to have been in the audience for *The Volunteers*, a play about the Whiskey Rebellion)
- Charlotte Brooke's play, *Belisarius*, published; was likely considered a "closet drama."
- Sarah Gardner appears at the Haymarket in *Mrs Doggrell in her Attitudes, or, The Effects of a West India Ramble*, apparently from her own pen, on 22 April 1795. This was announced as her first performance since returning from the West Indies. After Everard's benefit in 1795 Mrs Gardner was not heard from again. Other plays of her include *Charity* (farce, no date) and *The Loyal Subject* (comedy, no date)
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1796

- Civil disobedience to protest the two Gagging Acts leads to the trial of two leaders, John Binns and John Gale Jones; eventually Binns is acquitted and, though Jones is convicted, he is never sentenced
- J. T. Lowitz distills pure ethyl alcohol
- Jenner discovers a vaccine for smallpox, replacing the former dangerous method of inoculating against smallpox
- Amelia Simmon's *American Cookery*: recipes with Native American ingredients, such as pumpkin and winter squash
- Matthew Gregory, *The Monk* (Gothic novel--the model for "dark" Gothics)

- Burke, *Letter to a Noble Lord* (defense of career statesman against inherited political power)
- Watson, *An Apology for the Bible* (against Paine's *Age of Reason*)
- Lady Craven's comedy *The Provoked Wife* presented at Brandenburg House with Mrs. Abington acting as Lady Fanciful while Lady Craven appeared as Lady Brute. The comedy was reduced to three acts and great importance was assigned to the character assumed by the Margravine. Mrs. Abington, however, insisted that certain of the excisions should be restored, so that her part of Lady Fanciful should not suffer.
- A performance of *The Tragedy of Jane Shore* (tragedy by Nicholas Rowe, 1714) was given on Saturday 30 July 1796 at a theatre in Sydney, Australia. The pamphlet for the play was printed by a convict in the settlement, George Hughes, who was the operator of Australia's first printing press. The pamphlet for the play is the earliest surviving document printed in Australia.

1797

- Britain clashes with Spain in the West Indies; takes Trinidad
- Britain authorizes the search and seizure of neutral (e.g., American) ships
- Metal lathe invented by Henry Maudsley
- Passenger steam coach built by Richard Trevithick
- War with Napoleon begun
- Short supply of gold leads to the issuing of the first paper pound notes
- New tax on newspapers
- Two naval mutinies
- Death of Horace Walpole
- Death of Edmond Burke
- First issue of the *Anti-Jacobin*
- Mrs Abington returns to the stage after a seven year absence (1790-1797), finally quitting the stage in 1799.
- Actress Elizabeth Farren married Edward Smith-Stanley, 12<sup>th</sup> Earl of Derby (1752-1834) with whom she has a son and two daughters.
- Actress and Playwright Susanna Rowson publishes *Americans in England*
- Elizabeth Inchbald writes *Wives as They Were, Maids as They Are*, a play that takes a sharp look at modern life, touching on the current questioning of female subordination, but the comedy concludes in a conservative way, with wifely submission praised and the witty, independent-minded Miss Dorrillon learning that she cannot manage without fatherly guidance.

1798

- Income tax introduced (10%) to finance war
- Wordsworth and Coleridge publish *Lyrical Ballads*
- Malthus, *Essay on Population*
- Major rebellion in Ireland suppressed
- Henry Cavendish calculates the mass of the earth
- Joanna Baillie's *Plays on the Passions* published anonymously under the title, *A Series of Plays*. Contains *Count Basil*, a tragedy based on Love, *The Tryal*, a comedy based on Love, and *De Montfort*, a tragedy based on Hatred.
- Hannah Brand publishes in Norwich, by subscription, a volume of *Plays and Poems*

- Elizabeth Inchbald writes *Lover's Vows* from August Kotzebue's *Child of Love*, which gave sympathetic treatment to a "fallen woman" and her illegitimate son (also included in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*).

1799

- Humphry Davy develops nitrous oxide and uses it for anesthesia
- British Forces capture Malta
- "Combination Laws" are passed outlawing trade unions among workmen.(2)
- Robert Owen buys New Lanark Mills and established a model of enlightened and humane industrialization by constructing houses and schools for his workers' families. This behavior is not widely imitated by industrialists despite its success.
- Elizabeth Yates (nee Brunton), actress, was born on 21 January 1799 at Norwich into a theatrical family. Her grandfather, John Brunton, acted at Covent Garden in 1774 and her father, also John Brunton (*b.* 1775), went on the stage in 1795 and became the manager of the Norfolk circuit. Her mother, Anna Brunton, *née* Ross (*b.* 1773), was the daughter of the actress Mrs J. Brown, formerly Mrs William Ross. Elizabeth was her second daughter. Her aunts, Anne Brunton and Louisa Brunton, were also actresses. The latter married William Craven, first earl of Craven.

1800

- Davy publishes his research
- Franz Joseph Gall invents phrenology, the pseudoscience of judging character from the bumps on a person's skull
- Napoleon takes over in France
- Napoleon campaigns in Egypt and the Middle East, taking archeological teams with him and bringing back the founding stock of the Louvre
- Sugar prices began to decline
- Alessandro Volta develops the electric battery
- Act of Union with Ireland combines Irish and British parliaments.
- Royal College of Surgeons founded
- Use of high pressure steam is pioneered by Richard Trevithick.
- Population Act establishes regular census
- Assassination attempt on King George III took place at the Drury Lane Theatre 15 May 1800 when James Hadfield fired two pistols from the pit toward the King, sitting in the royal box. Shots missed by inches, Hadfield was subdued and King George, unruffled, ordered the performance to continue.
- Mary Robinson, "Perdita," dies in poverty at age 42. She championed the rights of women and was an ardent supporter of the French Revolution. She wrote poems, six novels, two plays, a female treatise and an autobiographical manuscript that was incomplete at the time of her death—later completed and published by her daughter.
- Joanna Baillie's *De Montfort* produced at Drury Lane Theatre with John Kemble and Sarah Siddons in leading roles. The play ran for eight nights but was not a huge success.
- Sophia Burrell produced two tragedies, *Maimian* and *Theodora, or The Spanish Daughter*, dedicated by permission to Duchess Georgiana of Devonshire.

1802

- Sophia Burrell dies on the Isle of Wight, 20 June 1802

1803

- Louisa Brunton (married name Louisa Craven, countess of Craven) makes her first appearance at Covent Garden Theatre 5 October 1803 as Lady Townly in *The Provoked Husband* opposite John Philip Kemble. Also performs as Beatrice in *Much Ado about Nothing*. Brunton was described as 'extremely handsome and striking', and her features as 'expressive of archness [and] vivacity'. She went on to play a series of secondary parts, principally in comedy. Her last recorded appearance was as Clara Sedley in Reynolds's comedy *The Rage* on 21 October 1807. She married William Craven, first Earl of Craven on 12 Decemberr 1807 and left the stage.

1805

- Elizabeth Inchbald's last comedy, *To Marry or not to Marry* performed at Covent Garden Theatre. After this, Inchbald turned to theatre criticism writing several critical and editorial works such as *The British Theatre*, a 25-volume collection of plays with critical introductions (1806-1809)

1809

- Playwright Hannah Cowley dies, 11 March.
- Elizabeth Inchbald publishes *Collection of Farces and Afterpieces*, a seven-volume work.

1811

- Elizabeth Inchbald publishes *The Modern Theatre*, a ten-volume work.

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