

The Plays and Poems of Nicholas Rowe

The Late Plays

Edited by
Stephen Bernard and Claudine van Hensbergen



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General Editor: Stephen Bernard

Volume I

The Early Plays

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OF NICHOLAS ROWE

THE PICKERING MASTERS SERIES

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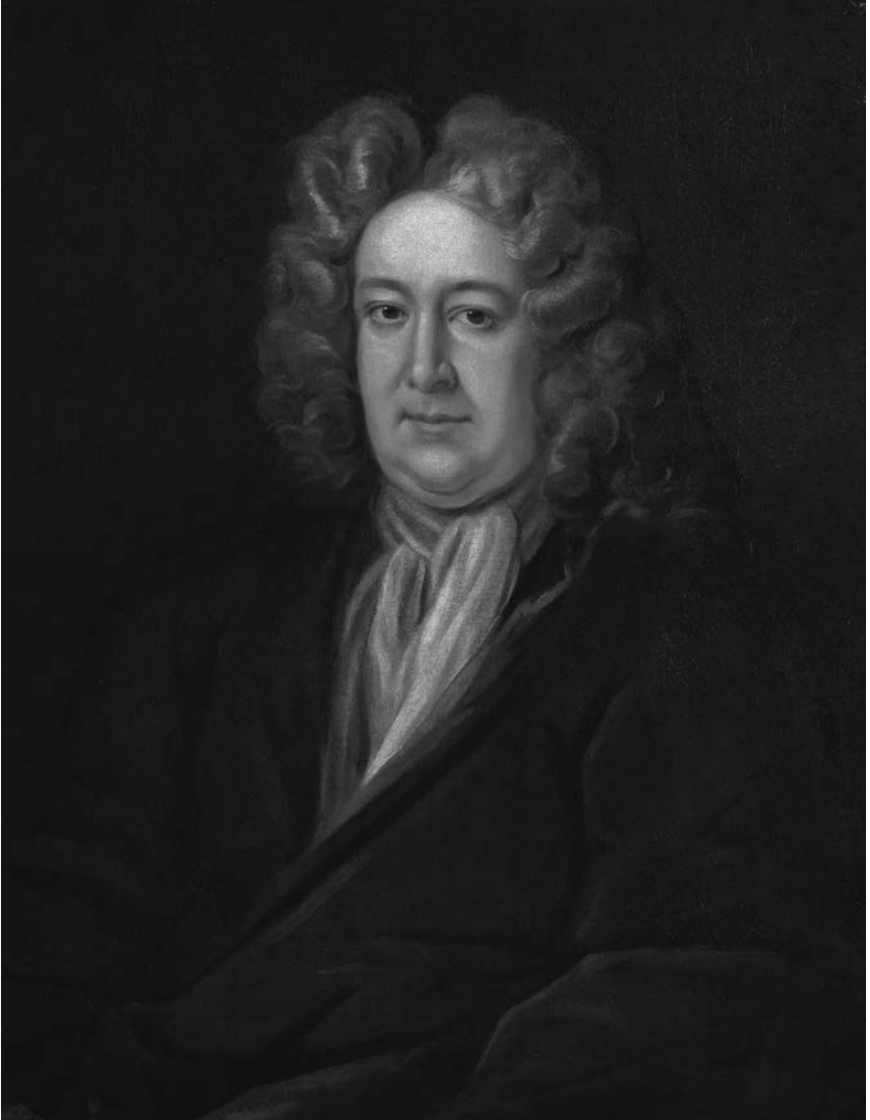


Figure 1 After unknown artist, *Unknown man, formerly thought to be Nicholas Rowe*, oil on canvas (c. 1718) (NPG 1512) © National Portrait Gallery, London 2016



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Stephen Bernard
Oxford

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Rebecca Bullard
Reading

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John McTague
Bristol

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Michael Caines
London

I first encountered Rowe's drama whilst writing my doctoral thesis at Oxford University. Focusing on the figure of the courtesan in the English literary marketplace c. 1660–1730, my research naturally turned to *Jane Shore*, and Rowe's portrayal of a suffering and repentant royal mistress. On this front, my sincere thanks are due to Ros Ballaster, then my doctoral supervisor, who provided invaluable feedback and a source of stimulating dialogue at all times in discussing Rowe, and a huge variety of other literature. My edited volume of the late plays is dedicated to her.

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Newcastle

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Robin Sowerby
Stirling

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Joe Lockwood
Cambridge

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Stephen Bernard and Michael Caines

On November 14, 1746, a young scholar of Westminster School, the future playwright Richard Cumberland, had the good fortune to attend a performance at the Theatre Royal in Covent Garden. Understandably, his attention fell on the celebrated actors rather than the play they performed. Even decades later, Cumberland could recall how the renowned but old-fashioned James Quin had

presented himself upon the rising of the curtain in a green velvet coat, embroidered down the seams, an enormous full-bottomed periwig, rolled stockings and high-heeled square-toed shoes; with little variation of cadence, and in a deep full tone, accompanied by a sawing kind of action, which had more of the Senate than of the Stage in it, he rolled out his heroics with an air of dignified indifference, that seemed to disdain the plaudits that were bestowed upon him.

Susannah Cibber then came to Cumberland's mind, along with her unvaried manner of singing out her lines:

when she had once recited two or three speeches, I could anticipate the manner of every succeeding one: it was like a long old legendary ballad of innumerable stanzas, every one of which is sung to the same tune, eternally chiming on the ear without variation or relief.

Next was Hannah Pritchard, 'an actress of a different cast', who 'had more nature, and of course, more change of tone and variety both of action and expression' than Mrs Cibber. It was only then that the star of the moment made his entrance:

. . . when, after a long and eager anticipation, I first beheld little GARRICK, then young and light and alive in every muscle and in every feature, come bounding on the stage, and pointing at the wittol Altamont and heavy-paced Horatio – Heavens, what a transition! it seemed as if a whole century had been stept over in the transition of a single scene; old things were done away, and a new order at once brought forward, bright

and luminous, and clearly destined to dispel the barbarisms and bigotry of a tasteless age, too long attached to the prejudices of custom, and superstitiously devoted to the illusions of imposing declamation.¹

Cumberland's recollections of that occasion, as published in his *Memoirs* (1806), are conventionally interpreted as a reliable illustration of the crucial transformation that acting on the English stage underwent during the eighteenth century. Yet it is seldom acknowledged that the effectiveness of his recollection relies on theatrical continuity, at the same time as it recalls a break with the past. For the actors Cumberland saw that night were acting a tragedy that had first been performed in 1703, and which was still a stock piece a century later: *The Fair Penitent* by Nicholas Rowe. Cumberland's readers would have recognized his allusions to characters such as Lothario and Calista, Altamont and Horatio; the 'whole century' that Cumberland saw traversed in Garrick's acting was not accompanied by an equally sweeping revolution in terms of the British theatrical repertoire. That was, in general terms, to be a more gradual process.

Across the century, in fact, Rowe's name would have been a familiar one to anybody familiar with the English theatre. 'Of that school which was founded rather upon the model of French tragedy, than upon improved imitation of our ancient dramatists, Rowe may be placed in the very first rank' – thus John Aikin in the *General Biography* compiled in the early nineteenth century – 'for of no other in this class so many pieces still keep possession of the stage, or are read with so much pleasure in the closet.'² His tragedies, nearer the time of their composition, could be said to have all, in some sense, 'succeeded' – 'and indeed they cannot be too much applauded'; as Giles Jacob saw it, writing not long after Rowe's death, 'there is a beauty of Expression, a masterly Wit, a nervous Strength, and a Diction more exactly Dramatick than appears in the Works of any other Modern Author'.³ Later, even William Hazlitt could concede that *The Fair Penitent* was 'a good tragedy which draws tears without moving laughter', and that Rowe 'had art and judgment enough to accommodate the more daring flights of a ruder age' – the age of Shakespeare, that is, as well as Philip Massinger, from whose tragedy *The Fatal Dowry* Rowe had adapted *The Fair Penitent* – 'to the polished well-bred mediocrity of the age he lived in'. 'He was . . . a sort of modernizer of antiquity', observes Hazlitt.⁴

With this ambivalent put-down in mind, it should be recognized that Rowe's 'fame', according to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, rests on three 'foundations': 'his tragedies, his edition of Shakespeare's plays, and his translation of Lucan's *Pharsalia*'.⁵ Shakespeare's ruder fame, that is, partly accounts for Rowe's, and explains why Rowe's polished but not necessarily scholarly edition of Shakespeare has received considerable critical attention over the three centuries since its publication in 1709.⁶ In particular, Rowe's edition begins with an account of Shakespeare's life, the first such concerted effort to provide a biography of Shakespeare to appear in print; and this account was to become the 'standard for the century', with later critics and editors adopting it and adapting it for years to come.⁷

By comparison, attention to the first and third aspects of Rowe's fame has been a piecemeal affair, and attempts to see Rowe's achievements as a whole, and in relation to one another, have been scarce. They are not only considerable but, as will be suggested below, and is implicit throughout this edition, cohere around a consistent set of artistic and intellectual values. The *Pharsalia* alone, which was first published posthumously in 1719, is no slight achievement; Samuel Johnson's praise of it as 'one of the greatest productions of English poetry' is the best-known comment on it, and is worth quoting in full:

Lucan is distinguished by a kind of senatorial or philosophic dignity, rather, as Quintilian observes, declamatory than poetically full of ambitious morality and pointed sentences, comprised in vigorous and animated lines. This character Rowe has very diligently and successfully preserved. His versification, which is such as his contemporaries practised, without any attempt at innovation or improvement, seldom wants either melody or force. His author's sense is sometimes a little diluted by additional infusions, and sometimes weakened by too much expansion. But such faults are to be expected in all translations, from the constraint of measures and dissimilitude of languages. The *Pharsalia* of Rowe deserves more notice than it obtains, and as it is more read will be more esteemed.⁸

Johnson's commendation of Rowe's *Lucan* is all the more remarkable coming after his dismissal of Rowe's plays, which he deems to lack 'any deep search into human nature, an accurate discriminations of kindred qualities, or nice display of passion in its progress; all is general and undefined'. Instead, Johnson offers a distinctly backhanded compliment to Rowe the dramatist:

Whence, then, has Rowe his reputation? From the reasonableness and propriety of some of his scenes, from the elegance of his diction, and the suavity of his verse. He seldom moves either terror or pity, but he often elevates the sentiments; he seldom pierces the breast, but he always delights the ear, and often improves the understanding.⁹

At the same time, Johnson has to admit that Rowe's heroine Jane Shore 'is always seen and heard with pity'.¹⁰ This is a significant concession, since the popularity of the handful of plays by Rowe that were to remain stock pieces throughout the eighteenth century did not depend on any deep searching into human nature or nice displays of passion's progress. Indeed, it seems that Rowe *had* to be seen and heard for his dramatic talents to be fully appreciated, and what he offered was precisely what was required by eighteenth-century audiences and actors alike from Anne Oldfield in his own day to Sarah Siddons at the end of the period, the right performers thrived on the supposedly 'general and undefined' opportunities offered by *The Tragedy of Jane Shore* (1714) and *The Fair Penitent* (1703) to epitomize pathos. At a time when 'Georgian theatre was the nation's dominant expressive

form in the long eighteenth century',¹¹ what Rowe called his 'she-tragedies' were among the most popular works of art. At the same time, Rowe's second play, *Tamerlane* (1701), may be seen as a related yet distinct phenomenon: a patriotic play that became a vehicle for espousing loyalty to an allegedly virtuous Crown, and rejecting the horrors of absolutism.

Yet these individual successes may also be seen as parts of a whole: as stages in an arc of artistic development that begins with Rowe's first tragedy, *The Ambitious Step-mother* (first performed in 1700), and his earliest published verses, and ends with *The Tragedy of the Lady Jane Gray* (1715) and Rowe's translation of the *Pharsalia*, with his edition of Shakespeare marking the end of this first phase of his literary career. It sounds no more than a truism to say that such an oeuvre needs to be seen in its appropriate political, religious, economic, literary, and theatrical context, yet such critical analysis has rarely been attempted – and so this edition both draws on the existing, disparate scholarship on Rowe and, it is hoped, will provide a basis for the further study and even appreciation of his work.

And why study that work? Apart from anything else, because Rowe was in some ways, as Annibel Jenkins has it, 'in every way a man and a writer of his time – to be more precise, of the Whig Settlement that brought in William and Mary in 1688 and the House of Hanover in 1714': 'Like his contemporaries Steele, Addison, and Swift, he fashioned his literary material out of his daily concerns. Indeed, as a typical poet-writer-politician, Rowe is perhaps a better mirror of his time than either Steele or Swift.'¹² This view is tested in the course of this edition, not least in regard to his early plays, which emerge as the work of a more ambivalent political playwright than formerly realized. Rowe has long been what we might call the 'lost Augustan', a crucial figure who was acknowledged to be such at the time, and has subsequently disappeared from view. That prospect is incomplete without him.

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From the account given by Samuel Johnson in *Lives of the English Poets* to the archival discoveries of Alfred W. Hesse in the twentieth century, the broad outline of Rowe's life has been well known to scholars for a long time. The earliest biographical account is an authorized and authoritative one. It appears in the course of the preface to Rowe's posthumously published translation of Lucan's *Pharsalia*, by Doctor James Welwood, a physician. Had Rowe lived longer, he would probably have supplied his own preface and concentrated entirely on writing about Lucan and his epic. Instead, Welwood covers those subjects, as he must, but also the life of Lucan's recently deceased English translator, whom he apparently knew well – or well enough to offer a mixture of friendly hagiography, personal testimony, and verifiably accurate information. Later research has discovered some crucial details; and Arthur Sherbo provides an especially useful, up-to-date and concise summary of Rowe's biography in his *ODNB* entry.

Born in 1674, Nicholas Rowe was the son of Elizabeth and John Rowe; the latter was a gentleman barrister who also owned an estate in Devon. Although Nicholas was to enrol to study law at the Middle Temple in 1691, the year before his father's death, and was called to the bar in 1696, it is apparent that his career as a writer was to be more deeply informed by his earlier education, at a Highgate grammar school and then Westminster School, as a King's Scholar under Dr Richard Busby – who had himself once considered becoming an actor, and whose other pupils at Westminster included the actor Barton Booth, and the writers John Dryden, Nathaniel Lee, and Matthew Prior.¹³ According to Welwood, 'the muses had stolen away his heart from his infancy':

He made an extraordinary progress in all the parts of learning taught in that school, and about the age of twelve was chosen one of the King's Scholars. He became in a little time master to a great perfection of all the classical authors, both Greek and Latin, and made a tolerable proficiency in the Hebrew, but poetry was his bent, and his darling study. He composed at that time several copies of verses upon different subjects both in Greek and Latin, and some in English, which were much admired, and the more that they cost him very little pains and seemed to flow from his imagination almost as fast as his pen.¹⁴

The publication of William Shippen's Latin verse 'Epistola ad N. R.' in 1698 confirms the impression of a young man moving in literary circles (Shippen was perhaps writing a few years earlier, when he and Rowe were both at the Middle Temple; Shippen had also studied at Westminster). The polymath parson Stephen Hales later recalled that while Rowe cut 'no mean Figure' at the Middle Temple, 'where he still kept his Chambers', 'the Spirit of Poetry soon got the better of the Works of Profit'. He was 'acquainted with the most eminent Personages of both Sexes, and made as handsome a Figure in the World, as a good Man and a good Poet could do'.¹⁵ He made friends with both Jonathan Swift and the young Alexander Pope – with whom he might be thought to have had political differences (although this edition suggests that this was not so marked as has been thought in the past) – as well as Richard Steele, John Dennis and Sir Samuel Garth, among others; Pope's friendship in particular was to prove crucial to Rowe's later career, and the younger poet clearly enjoyed the older's company a great deal. 'I am just returned from the country', Pope informed John Caryl in 1713,

with Mr. Rowe did me the favour to accompany me and to pass a week at Binfield. I need not tell you how much a man of his turn could not but entertain me, but I must acquaint you there is a vivacity and gayety [sic] of disposition almost peculiar to that gentleman, which rends it impossible to part from him without that uneasiness and chagrin which generally succeeds all great pleasures.¹⁶

Pope's enemy Dennis, meanwhile, humorously wrote to Rowe describing him as 'a Gentleman, who lov'd to lie in Bed all Day for his Ease, and to sit up all Night for his Pleasure'.¹⁷

Rowe had married Antonia Parsons, the daughter of a government functionary, in 1693, and moved to the parish of St Andrew, Holborn; the couple had six children who died in infancy and a son, John, born in 1699, who survived them. With an annual income of £300 following his father's death, Rowe was well set up to pursue his interests in both poetry and drama, informed by a thorough grounding in the classics, as well as 'modern dramatic literature'.¹⁸ It is no surprise to find that plays, poems, and history books in Latin, Greek, French, Spanish, and English are well represented in the catalogue of his substantial library published, like his *Pharsalia*, in 1719, following his death in December 1718. Although it is impossible to say when Rowe acquired these books with any precision (although the given individual publication dates do help to establish *termini post quem*), it seems unlikely that Rowe acquired the entirety of this substantial collection of over 600 titles in the final decade of his life. It seems probable at least that the catalogue includes many volumes that he had owned for some time, and that had proved useful to him in the course of his own writing, such as those relating to Homer's *Odyssey* and ancient British history: his folio copy of Jean de Sponde's *Homeri quae extant omnia*, perhaps, that could have informed his own *Ulysses*; and another folio containing the *Book of Martyrs* that could have informed the writing of *The Royal Convert*.¹⁹

As will be discussed in more detail below, Rowe's career as a dramatist began in 1700 with *The Ambitious Step-mother* and ended fifteen years later with *The Tragedy of the Lady Jane Gray*. Between those two serious dramas came five more – *Tamerlane* (first performed in 1701), *The Fair Penitent* (1703), *Ulysses* (1705), *The Royal Convert* (1707) and *The Tragedy of Jane Shore* (1714) – and one farce, *The Biter* (1704). In the context of the contemporary repertoire, Rowe was relatively unusual for specializing so markedly in the business of writing tragedies. Records for the early years of the eighteenth century are incomplete, but it seems that, during the season of 1700–1701, for example, the London stage saw twenty-two new plays in total, including *The Ambitious Step-mother* in December, and five other tragedies later in the season – two more at Lincoln's Inn Fields and three at Drury Lane. During the season of 1705–1706, *Ulysses* was one of four tragedies performed in the space of four months, out of a total of sixteen new plays. In 1714–1715, Rowe's last play, *The Tragedy of the Lady Jane Gray*, was one of fourteen new pieces debuted that season; it appears to have been the only tragedy.

Alongside these contributions to the theatre, however, Rowe was also publishing verses in various genres – such as the 'Epistle to Flavia' that appeared in *A New Miscellany of Original Poems, on Several Occasions* in the summer of 1701, and his translation of a French translation from the Greek, 'The Golden Verses of Pythagoras', which appeared in late 1706. For Edmund Curll, he translated the first book of Claudius Quillet's *Callipaedia* (1712); the same bookseller would put out a volume of Rowe's *Poems on Several Occasions. By N. Rowe, Esq.* in

1714 to capitalize on the success of *Jane Shore*. By then, Rowe's name had long been a useful one for booksellers, principally Jacob Tonson the elder, who had published several of Rowe's plays and his illustrated edition of Shakespeare in 1709 – indeed, Rowe is credited on the title page as Shakespeare's editor, supplies a 'biographical account' as an introduction, and edits the play texts with modern performance and reading in mind, instigating a new phase in the history of Shakespeare's works. (Indeed, 'without Rowe's life (1709) and without the Pope-Theobald controversy, the history of Shakespeare studies would have been very different, perhaps much less illustrious'.²⁰) His crowning achievement would be *Lucan's Pharsalia*, published posthumously in March 1719.

In turn, Rowe had something to gain from publication other than an income. Poems, plays, translations, editions – all were vehicles for advancement, as Rowe sought patronage from the establishment, whether Tory or Whig. He had dedicated *The Ambitious Step-mother* to the Earl of Jersey, who was then Lord Chamberlain, *Ulysses* to Sidney Godolphin, then Lord Treasurer, both of whom were Tories; *The Royal Convert* was dedicated to the Earl of Halifax and Rowe's edition of Shakespeare to Charles Seymour, Duke of Somerset, the member of Tonson's Whig Kit-Kat Club who had laid the foundation stone for the Queen's Theatre, where that play was first performed.

On 5 February, 1709, Rowe was appointed under-secretary to James Douglas, second Duke of Queensberry, who was then Secretary of State for Scotland. This was no sinecure, and official business must have kept him agreeably busy. Hales recollected: 'I don't find he was in any publick Employment before the Duke of Queensberry made him his Secretary, with whom he not only lived in an honourable Service, but a near Familiarity and Friendship.'²¹

With the fall of the Whigs from power, late in Queen Anne's reign, Rowe's rise was temporarily arrested. Queensberry died in 1711, and Rowe's wife Antonia died in February 1712. Rowe moved out of central London to the village of Stockwell, not far to the south, and his house in Fetter Lane stood empty. He seems to have been dragged into a court case around this time, involving the widow of a naval captain who came to him asking for help with a petition to the government for financial aid, but the outcome is not known. There is also a crushing anecdote about him seeking preferment via a Tory minister, who advised him to learn Spanish, which Rowe went away and did. On his return, he was told: 'Then, Sir, I envy you the pleasure of reading *Don Quixote* in the original.'²²

Rowe's fortunes started to turn the following year, when it seems that Pope brokered a deal between him and Bernard Lintot for the publication of Rowe's new play. This work in imitation of Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Jane Shore*, then played at Drury Lane in February 1714, and enjoyed a thirteen-night run. The restoration of the Whigs to power that summer, when Anne died and George I acceded to the throne, led ultimately to Rowe's promotion to the post of Poet Laureate in 1715, following another play in the same historical-tragic mould, *The Tragedy of the Lady Jane Gray*, the politically prudent publication of *Maece-nas: Verses Occasion'd by the Honours Conferr'd on the Right Honourable the*

Earl of Halifax, and the death of the post's previous incumbent, Nahum Tate. In Arthur Sherbo's view, Rowe brought 'dignity and respectability to that position, virtues which his predecessors had not shown'.²³ He continued to pay his political dues with verses such as 'Verses upon the Sickness and Recovery of the Right Honourable Robert Walpole, Esq.', which appeared in many editions in 1716. He was married again that year, to Anne Devenish, the daughter of a Dorset gentleman, with whom he would have a daughter, Charlotte; and was appointed a land surveyor of the customs of the Port of London, a clerk on the Prince of Wales's council and, in 1718, a clerk of the presentations. He was also, over this period, working on his monumental translation of Lucan.

At the age of forty-five, and the height of his success, Rowe fell ill. His death on 6 December, 1718 meant that he did not live to enjoy his profitable new appointments for long, or to see his translation of the *Pharsalia* in print. There were tributes in the form of an elegiac anthology, *Musarum Lachrymae*, edited by Charles Beckingham, which included odes by Susanna Centlivre and Nicholas Amhurst, and a collection of Rowe's plays, while he was buried in Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey on December 19. His widow Anne dedicated the translation to George I and received a pension from him of £40 per annum; she died in 1747, not long after the publication of a new edition of her late husband's dramatic works, dedicated to the Prince of Wales.

This posthumous publication turns out to be as good a place as any to look for evidence of Rowe as the mirror of his times: according to the *General Biography*, Anne Devenish, 'a most accomplished lady, of a very good family in Dorsetshire', had become close to the Prince (and Princess) of Wales, who was then 'instructing his children to repeat fine moral speeches out of plays, particularly Mr. Rowe's'. A new edition was supposedly the Prince's own idea, and was undertaken by Thomas Newton, who wrote the dedication in Mrs Devenish's name.²⁴ Even after his death, that tendency of Rowe's noted by Johnson – towards the elegant expression of sentiments of general applicability that could improve the understanding – was serving him well.

It should not be underestimated how such a quality could make a playwright's works in demand as polite reading matter; across the long eighteenth century, Rowe was among the most often reprinted and collected of all English playwrights.²⁵ The demand for plays to read could easily outlast their popularity on the stage: *Tamerlane* was still being reprinted separately in the 1790s, twenty years after it had started to fade from the repertoire, and the same can be said of *Lady Jane Gray*, last performed in 1774. Between them, these two plays plus *Jane Shore* and *The Fair Penitent* were reprinted a total of 140 times.²⁶

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Rowe belonged to a post-Restoration generation of writers that also included William Congreve (born 1670), Colley Cibber (1671), Richard Steele and Joseph Addison (both 1672) – a generation whose literary work would be shaped to a large

extent by the political and theatrical upheavals of the 1680s and 1690s. To take but the most obvious influences: the overthrow of James II in 1688 and the accession of William III and Mary II as co-regents inaugurated a new phase in English relations with France, its chief continental rival; while the theatre world was proving equally unstable, with London's two licensed theatre companies collapsing into one then dividing again, and the Reverend Jeremy Collier throwing out his damaging accusations in *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* (1698). Dryden, one of the formative influences on writing for the Restoration stage, died in the spring of 1700. Congreve would write no more plays after the same year. As a specialist in tragedy, Rowe looked back to Congreve's single effort in the genre, *The Mourning Bride* (1697), as well as the tragedies of Dryden, Thomas Otway, and John Banks. If nothing else, he would prove to be unusual for persisting in working almost exclusively within that genre.

In March 1695, allegations of mismanagement, power struggles, and the breakdown of a working relationship between Christopher Rich, the manager of the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, and his leading actors, had led to the formation of a new company led by some of the most experienced and talented actors of the time. With Thomas Betterton, Elizabeth Barry, and Anne Bracegirdle at its head, this new company, known as the Actors' Company, reconverted Lincoln's Inn Fields into a theatre, as it had been earlier in the Restoration period; it was to remain an independent operation for another decade.²⁷ All four of Rowe's plays prior to *Ulysses* first appeared here.

Competition between Lincoln's Inn Fields and Drury Lane – competition of a kind that Betterton, Barry, and Bracegirdle would have remembered from previous decades, before the Duke's Company merged with the King's – had ramifications for the performance of all new plays. There was a well-established repertory system already in place, for a start, with stock pieces by the likes of Dryden, Otway, Lee, Cibber, Vanbrugh, Congreve, and others – not to mention those few dramatists of the pre-Restoration era whose works were still deemed stage-worthy, such as a few adapted pieces by Shakespeare and various plays in the Beaumont and Fletcher canon – offering both companies a vital basic choice of dependable options. Since staging new plays tended to require expenditure on props, costumes and scenery, how much of the season could be given over to new pieces often depended on how much capital the company could freely invest in such ventures. Earlier in his career, the staging of spectacular productions had been one of Betterton's specialities. Yet Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre was unfortunately, in Shirley Strum Kenny's view, too 'cramped' for such extravaganzas: 'It had never been designed for fancy machine staging or large-scale shows.' Furthermore, the Actors' Company had several financial disadvantages:

[They] had no capital at all, and their 'sharers' agreement' specifically forbade the involvement of outside investors. They had left behind their entire stock of scenery and costumes, and they had to pay for the conversion of a tennis court to a theatre . . .²⁸

Betterton made at least one attempt to take over Drury Lane, the bigger venue, around 1701, and was thwarted by Rich.²⁹

Competition between the two companies did lead, however, to some audacious innovations in the structuring of an evening's entertainment and increased expectations of spectacle and gimmickry. May 1701, for example, saw Rich stage *The Virgin Prophetess*, an English opera by Elkanah Settle with music by the Moravian composer Gottfried Finger. (English operas were not through-sung, as their Italian counterparts were.) When advertised in *The Post-Boy* as early as May 1700 (probably with an earlier premiere in mind), it was claimed that this opera would be

for Grandeur, Decorations, Movements of Scenes &c . . . infinitely superior to *Dioclesian (The Prophetess)* which hitherto has been the greatest that the English Stage has produced, that probably 'twill equal the greatest Performance of that Kind, in any of the foreign Theatres.³⁰

In other words, the race was on to domesticate that enticing foreign beast, the opera, which, although its first appearance in England narrowly predates the Restoration, remained expensive and difficult to get right some forty years later.³¹ Such productions had led to 'raised' prices and advertisements such as this one, emphasizing the novelty and scale of the new production. As it happens, *The Virgin Prophetess* 'sank almost without trace, and it was Rich's last venture in that variety of opera'. A 'trace' of it did survive its initial run of three to six nights in 1701, however, in that the 'Dome scene' would turn up in subsequent seasons 'as an entr'acte or afterpiece'.³²

This recycling stratagem of Rich's was to become a prominent convention of theatrical entertainment throughout the eighteenth century, and into the nineteenth – a mixed bill consisting of a main piece and at least one or two subsidiary entertainments, including a complementary afterpiece. Nor was opera the only foreign import on offer, as Rowe's prologue to *The Ambitious Step-mother* implies, with its sighing recollection of how the 'weeping fair' – 'Those kind protectors of the Tragick Muse' – with their tears 'did moving Otway's labours crown, | And made the poor Monimia's Grief their own':

O cou'd this Age's Writers hope to find
An Audience to Compassion thus inclin'd,
The Stage would need no Farce, nor Song nor Dance,
Nor Capering Monsieur brought from Active *France*.³³

There was no shortage of rival entertainments to the theatre, and audiences were far from being satisfied with the 'Tragick Muse' alone. 'Must *Shakespear, Fletcher*, and laborious *Ben*, | Be left for *Scaramouch*, and *Harlequin*?', Rowe asks rhetorically in the epilogue to the same play.³⁴ He would still be complaining about the temptations of the gambling table, talking politics in the coffee house

and musical prodigies (such as ‘Harmonious *Peg* and warbling *Valentini*’) by the time of *The Royal Convert*, seven years later:

... neglected Verse, in long Disgrace,
 Amongst your many Pleasures finds no Place;
 The virtuous Laws of common Sense forswearing,
 You damn us, like packt Juries, without hearing.
 Each puny Whipster here, is Wit enough,
 With scornful Airs, and supercilious Snuff,
 To cry, *This Tragedy’s such damn’d grave Stuff* . . .³⁵

While agreeing that this may be a ‘just’ complaint ‘for a time’, Colley Cibber offers this answer:

... the best Play that ever was writ, may tire by being too often repeated,
 a Misfortune naturally attending the Obligation, to play every Day . . .
 Satiety is, seldom enough consider’d, by either Criticks, Spectators, or
 Actors, as the true, not to say just Cause of declining Audiences, to the
 most rational Entertainments.³⁶

In these unpromising circumstances, Rowe’s first tragedy, *The Ambitious Step-mother*, premiered at Lincoln’s Inn Fields in late December 1700. An ‘intrigue play with an oriental setting in the old [Elkannah] Settle manner’, as Judith Milhous notes,³⁷ it seems to have been a success, although there is ‘virtually no hard information’ to go on; overall, the companies were struggling, as suggested by a contemporary comment: ‘I believe there is no poppet shew in a country town but takes more money than both the play houses.’³⁸ Already there were the indications here that Rowe was a talent to watch, albeit a raw one. The lurid plot concerns a queen, Artemisa, and the Machiavellian Mirza with whom she plans to take control of the kingdom after having her husband killed. Here are the Hobbesian archetypes of viciousness in Rowe’s dramatic universe, for whom ‘There is not, must not be a bound for greatness; | Power gives a Sanction, and makes all things just’.³⁹ Their shared (and ultimately self-defeating) appetite for power unrestrained by self-control stands in contrast to the virtue of the true heir to the throne, Artaxerxes, and Memnon, his general. In a throwback to the kind of action favoured by Nathaniel Lee, Mirza’s daughter Cleone stabs herself in front of the imprisoned Artaxerxes (whom she loves unrequitedly, another persistent Rowe motif) and Memnon, in order to prove that she is trustworthy.

In the first edition of the play, published the following month, Rowe claims that he had been obliged to cut nearly 600 lines, to the ‘great disadvantage’ of the piece as it had been staged: ‘The Fable . . . was left dark and intricate’. Rowe also modestly observes here in the ‘Epistle Dedicatory’ to *The Ambitious Step-mother* that ‘the Town has not receiv’d this Play ill’.⁴⁰ If that had been the case, and the Town had been neither more nor less enthusiastic than that, it hardly explains

why Rowe's collaboration with this particular acting company continued the way it did, from season to season. It seems quite possible that he had scored a hit. The anonymous *A Comparison Between the Two Stages* 1702; (sometimes attributed to Charles Gildon) suggests that *The Ambitious Step-mother* and *The Ladies Visiting Day* 'divided the Winter between 'em', although the speakers in this critical dialogue have their reservations about Rowe's tragedy:

It's well writ indeed, but there's nothing in the Play that merits our Attention. [The author] seems ambitious of following Otway in his Passions; but, Alas! how far off? . . . I think very well of the Play and of the Author, and believe he will be able to show us Wonders in time: But . . . I think the Business of his Tragedy very trivial, and that there's nothing extraordinary in it but the Stile.⁴¹

It is also notable that Rowe at this stage in his career already had decided notions about the kind of tragedy he wanted to write, which explains his preference for killing off the characters of Artaxerxes and Amestris rather than saving them:

. . . since Terror and Pity are laid down for the Ends of Tragedy, by the greater Master and Father of Criticism, I was always inclin'd to fancy, that the last and remaining Impressions, which ought to be left on the minds of an Audience, should proceed from one of these two. They should be struck with Terror in several parts of the Play, but always Conclude and go away with Pity, a sort of regret proceeding from good nature, which tho an uneasiness, is not always disagreeable, to the person who feels it. It was this passion that the famous Mr *Otway* succeeded so well in touching, and must and will at all times affect people, who have any tenderness or humanity. If therefore I had sav'd *Artaxerxes* and *Amestris*, I believe (with submission to my Judges) I had destroy'd the greatest occasion for Compassion in the whole Play . . . As for that part of the Objection, which says, that Innocent persons ought not to be shewn unfortunate; The success and general approbation, which many of the best Tragedies that have been writ, and which were built on that foundation, have met with, will be a sufficient answer for me.⁴²

Although the triple appeal here to the highest critical authority (Aristotle), a popular English tragedian (Otway), and the test of turning theory into practice ('The success and general approbation . . .') is cannily conventional, it is worth noting that pity ('a sort of regret proceeding from good nature') rather than terror already lies at the heart of the matter for Rowe. This characteristic preference is one element that lends coherence to his dramatic works.

About a year later, Lincoln's Inn Fields premiered Rowe's second tragedy, *Tamerlane*, which would go on to be one of the most popular plays of the whole

century (although it should be noted that the prompter John Downes saw its elevation to the status of a 'Stock-Play' as being 'chiefly' due to the acting of Thomas Betterton in the title role, John Vanbruggen as Bajazet, George Powell as Mone-ses, and Anne Bracegirdle as Selima).⁴³ The year before William III's death, here was a seemingly unambiguous, jingoistic panegyric to a Christian hero defeating a tyrannical opponent, the virtuous Tamerlane being the antithesis of the madly ambitious Bajazet, who was immediately identified with Louis XIV – a Protestant champion versus a tyrannical Roman Catholic absolutist. On this point, Rowe himself was prudently coy, but did not miss his opportunity to go on the offensive in a patriotic cause. 'Some People', he wrote in his 'Epistle Dedicatory', 'have fancy'd, that in the Person of Tamerlane I have alluded to the greatest Character of the present Age [i.e. William III]':

There are many Features, 'tis true, in that that Great Man's Life, not unlike His Majesty: His Courage, his Piety, his Moderation, his Justice, and his Fatherly Love of his People, but above all, his Hate of Tyranny and Oppression, and his zealous Care for the Common Good of Mankind . . . Several Incidents are alike in their Stories; and there wants nothing to his Majesty but such a deciding Victory, as that by which *Tamerlane* gave Peace to the World. That is yet to come: But I hope we may reasonably expect it from the unanimity of the present Parliament, and so formidable a Force as that Unanimity will give Life and Vigour to.⁴⁴

Records are also scanty for this season, but it seems that the play was acted at least three times, with a fourth proposed in June 1702 as a benefit for Mary Hodgson, who sang the play's song 'To thee O gentle sleep alone', only for it to be declared that 'it cannot be acted', for reasons unspecified.⁴⁵ More extraordinarily, this compliment to a king who had actually died on March 2, 1702 might not be thought to be a good long-term repertory prospect – although maybe that only served to imbue Rowe's tribute with unexpected pathos. Either way, *Tamerlane* was destined to become a staple means of celebrating the Glorious Revolution, being performed annually on November 4 and 5 to commemorate William's landing at Torbay on the latter date in 1688. Such a jingoistic association was bound to make its mark on critical discourse about the play. The *Country Journal* could call it in 1739 'one of the finest Pieces of Poetry, that ever did Honour to the English Language'.⁴⁶

First acted in the spring of 1703, *The Fair Penitent* was likewise destined to become a stock piece, despite its initially modest run – it was 'one of the most pleasing tragedies on the stage', according to Johnson.⁴⁷ The scenario is a strikingly streamlined one, although some complained that the title was inaccurate: the title character, Calista, does not initially repent of her fling with the seductive Lothario, but marries the honourable Altamont and rails against her fate. Lothario is killed in a duel; only after that does Calista belatedly repent. Audiences were long fascinated by this story, although critics were divided on the issue of its morality.

Rowe was by now a well-established literary figure, whose last two plays had been published by the prestigious Tonson. He was a playwright worth criticizing and satirizing, as in not only *A Comparison Between the Two Stages*; there was also the anonymous poet who took issue with *The Fair Penitent*, in a fit of Collier-style anti-theatricalism, and condemns how Rowe ‘copies Nature with a Luscious Muse, | And gives his Heroins Speeches for the Stews’:

In Tragick-Buskins let him still improve;
But not paint Lewdness, and then call it Love.
Let fair Calista no more be his Pride;
His Fancy form’d her from the chaste Cheapside:
He makes her Jilt, Debauch’d, and then a Bride.
His pious Moral good Instruction gives,
If first commencing Wh—res, will make good Wives.⁴⁸

Most importantly, with *The Fair Penitent* Rowe struck out in a fresh direction, away from the exotic, multiply plotted territory of *The Ambitious Step-mother* and *Tamerlane*, towards a more domestic, confined type of tragic action – one that Laura Brown has described as ‘a moralized version of Otway’s most domestic affective tragedy [*The Orphan*]’, despite its narrative basis in *The Fatal Dowry* by Massinger.⁴⁹ Thematically, *The Fair Penitent* anticipates *Jane Shore*, and confirmed Rowe’s reputation as a tragedian of note, while also drawing on the pathos of the Arpasia plot in *Tamerlane*. With this play Rowe declared once more his desire to ‘excite . . . generous Pity’ in his auditors.⁵⁰ Downes thought it was ‘a very good Play for three Acts; but failing in the two last, answer’d not their Expectation’.⁵¹ (This comment resonates with Rowe’s own remark on *The Ambitious Step-mother*, that there were some who had told him to give ‘quite another turn’ to the ‘latter part of the story’ involving Artaxerxes and Amestris.)⁵² Yet *The Fair Penitent* was acted again on June 8 ‘At the Desire of several Persons of Quality’, for Mrs Prince’s benefit,⁵³ and it may have been that it was a farcical mishap at the close of one performance, not unlike the descent into absurdity that marred the opening night of Samuel Johnson’s tragedy *Irene* in 1749, that led to the temporary disappearance of Rowe’s play from the Lincoln’s Inn Fields repertory.⁵⁴ Such a minor setback was to be completely eclipsed in later years, however; *The Fair Penitent* was to become one of the key artworks in English culture of the eighteenth century.

Changing tack once more, Rowe followed *The Fair Penitent* with *The Biter* in November 1704, which was to be his only attempt at a comedy. It ran for six nights, which was no mean feat, especially as it was running against Cibber’s hit comedy *The Careless Husband*. And *The Biter* is not without interest as a deviation from Rowe’s accepted *modus operandi*, and an attempt to comment satirically on contemporary England. It takes its name from the character of Pinch, whose irritating affectation involves ‘biting’ his victims by leading them on with a straight-faced lie and then immediately exposing their gullibility. This supposed

fashion among young men of the city is anathema to the rich *chinoiserie*-mad merchant Sir Timothy Tallapoy, whom the conventional young gentlemen and ladies of Restoration comedy wish to circumvent: Sir Timothy had planned to marry off his daughter Angelica to Pinch, but is manoeuvred into seeing exactly what Pinch is while the others go about their own more satisfactory arrangements. The Jonsonian satire establishes a gulf of class between Sir Timothy, whose extravagant pretensions are meant to seem all the more ridiculous for their exposure in the course of a country fair at Croydon. Despite its reputation as Rowe's most abject failure, the play has its comic moments; Robert D. Hume has fairly called it an 'amusing, farcical piece', and 'decidedly tart' for its time.⁵⁵

By this point in time, it seems that genuine competition between theatres had diminished into a stand-off, so that the season-to-season demand for new plays, tragedies or comedies, was neither guaranteed nor particularly high. 'Competition in plays diminished almost to the vanishing point', as Milhous says of the years immediately before the Actors' Company moved into the Queen's Theatre, the grand new venue John Vanbrugh was building in the Haymarket.⁵⁶ In the 1702–1703 season, for instance, *The Fair Penitent* had been one of only two new tragedies staged at Lincoln's Inn Fields (the other being *The Governour of Cyprus* by John Oldmixon, while Drury Lane offered a single new tragedy, Gildon's adaptation of Lee's *Lucius Junius Brutus, The Patriot*; all three were set in exotic Mediterranean locations). By 1705, the theatres 'seem almost to have agreed to split the audience, Drury Lane catering to the less sophisticated, Lincoln's Inn Fields seeking an audience satisfied with less flashy additions or even just unadorned plays'.⁵⁷

Prominent among those for whom 'unadorned plays' proved to be attractive were the sophisticates of the Kit-Cat Club,⁵⁸ a fraternity of which Vanbrugh was a member. The change of venue ought to have marked the beginning of a brave new era. Betterton's biographer, David Roberts, notes that the move represented 'a good deal for all parties': 'Vanbrugh gained experienced and disciplined performers, who gained a better theatre and more security.'⁵⁹ It was good news, in theory, for playwrights, too: 'Most of the year's new plays are properly considered as part of the new competition fired by Vanbrugh', Milhous writes.⁶⁰

But it was not to be: Rowe's next two plays, *Ulysses* and *The Royal Convert*, instead belong to a period of turmoil and radical transformation, and with them the first phase of his career as a dramatist comes to an end. The new theatre was, for one thing, not an ideal venue for Rowe's tragedies. Writing some thirty years later, Cibber could recall both its architectural opulence and its acoustic shortcomings:

. . . almost every proper Quality, and Convenience of a good Theatre had been sacrificed, or neglected, to shew the Spectator a vast, triumphal Piece of Architecture! And that the best Play, for the Reasons, I am going to offer, could not but be under great Disadvantages, and be less capable of delighting the Auditor, here, than it could have been in [Lincoln's Inn Fields]. For what could their vast Columns, their gilded Cornices, their

immoderate high Roofs avail, when scarce one Word in ten, could be distinctly heard in it?⁶¹

Spoken dramas such as *Ulysses* and *The Royal Convert*, in which the combination of these great actors' voices speaking the poet-playwright's words was crucial, were apparently ill-adapted to such an auditorium, in which 'the articulate Sounds of a speaking Voice were drown'd, by the hollow Reverberations of one Word upon another'.⁶² (Cibber also criticized the location of the theatre: 'The City, the Inns of Court, and the middle Part of the Town, which were the most constant Support of a Theatre, and chiefly to be relied on, were now too far, out of the Reach.')⁶³

After *The Biter*, Rowe reverted to tragic type. And just as *The Biter* might be thought of as parallel to Rowe's more playful occasional verses, *Ulysses* bears comparison with his Latin translations as a polished, modernized take on a classical source. It first appeared at the Queen's Theatre on November 23, 1705, 'all new Cloath'd, and Excellently well perform'd', according to Downes,⁶⁴ and would appear another ten times in the same season – again, although it was not to become a stock piece, this was no mean achievement for a new play at the time. It boasted Betterton in the lead role – the last he would essay in his long and distinguished career – and showed Rowe playing to his strengths after the damp squib of *The Biter*. Concentrating on Ulysses' return to Ithaca in disguise, the play renews the theme of moderate and pious rule versus (sexual) tyranny, as in *Tamerlane*, in the form of Penelope's fending-off of her suitors. The most ruthless of them, Eurymachus, threatens to kill Telemachus if Penelope does not give in to his demands; the disguised Ulysses is involved in his plots but also, in testing his wife, discovers her true faithfulness to him. The struggle for control of the island kingdom brings about the end of Telemachus' clandestine marriage with Eurymachus' daughter Semanthe. *Ulysses* is interesting for combining elements of heroic and pathetic posturing, linked by the theme of theodicy: Ulysses' unshakeable faith in divine assistance is rewarded, albeit disquietingly because his son makes a mistake that eventually leads Eurymachus' men to come to his assistance. Ulysses and Penelope are reunited, and Ithaca regains its rightful king – but Telemachus and Semanthe, whom the audience was doubtless expected to pity grievously, are separated forever.

The Royal Convert, Rowe's fifth tragedy, occupies a pivotal position in his oeuvre. It enjoyed a relatively good run, including five consecutive nights initially, beginning on November 25, 1707, followed by a further two performances on December 1 and January 1, the latter being again 'At the Desire of several Persons of Quality'. These were among the final performances at the Haymarket of a company that was soon to migrate east to Drury Lane amid yet more wrangling among the managers and the Lord Chamberlain. The end of this first phase of Rowe's dramatic career coincided with a new period of readjustment in the London theatre world. As Milhous points out, when he played the title role in *Ulysses* in 1705, Betterton had been an appropriately venerable seventy years old, and he was 'starting to cut back on the number of his appearances'.⁶⁵ *Ulysses* had been his final appearance in a new role. Rowe would pay a heartfelt tribute to Betterton

in his biographical essay on Shakespeare in the 1709 edition of Shakespeare's *Works*, and wrote an epilogue for Betterton's benefit on April 7 in the same year.

By contrast, in *The Royal Convert*, it was the considerably younger Barton Booth, formerly cast as Ulysses/Betterton's son Telemachus, who took on the highest-ranking male role of Hengist, King of Kent; Robert Wilks played Aribert, his brother. Elizabeth Barry, Penelope to Betterton's Ulysses, remained on the scene here in the role of Rodogune, the formidable Saxon princess to whom Hengist is betrothed; but the third member of this triumvirate, Anne Bracegirdle, who played Semanthe, beloved of Telemachus, gave way to her younger rival, Ann Oldfield, in the second named female role of Ethelinda. (Bracegirdle had retired from the stage after her final performance as Lavinia in *Caius Marius* on February 18, 1707, and only returned to it for the aforementioned benefit for Betterton a couple of months later. Elizabeth Barry would retire, return and retire again over the next couple of years, and maintained a nominal membership of an acting company until she died in 1713.⁶⁶)

The Royal Convert is set in Kent, in the same murky understood age after classical antiquity and before the Norman invasion of 1066, and involves an uneasy alliance of Saxons that has to be sealed by marriage; King Hengist, however, rejects his promised bride, Rodogune, for Ethelinda, a Christian who is secretly married to his brother Aribert. For her part, Rodogune complicates matters further by falling in love with Aribert. *The Royal Convert* revolves around these four characters – two royal brothers, a Christian captive and a 'haughty' pagan princess – and how their personal relationships affect what another might call a moment of regime change, as much of Rowe's work does: Rodogune and Hengist vie for control of the situation over the last two acts, while Ethelinda remains true to her faith, inspiring courage in the face of death in her convert husband.

Both *The Royal Convert* and *Ulysses* play on issues of rightful succession to a throne, the liberty of a kingdom's subjects, and international relations. They therefore reflect Rowe's support for the campaign to unite the kingdoms of England and Scotland, and to protect the country from Jacobitism and the perceived threat of the Stuart dynasty's return to power. Rowe wrote to the moment in his prologue to *The Royal Convert* when he contrasted the 'puny Whipster' and his 'supercilious Snuff', turning up his nose at verse tragedy, with those 'more equal Judges', the 'generous Warriors' just returned from one of the major engagements in the War of the Spanish Succession, the Battle of Ramillies, in 1706:

You that have fought for Liberty and Laws,
Whose Valour the proud *Gallick* Tyrant awes,
Join to assert the sinking Muses Cause,
Since the same Flame, by different Ways express'd,
Glows in the Heroe's and the Poet's Breast.⁶⁷

The Duke of Marlborough's war effort was very much on playwrights' minds at this time: Abigail Williams notes a 'spate' of plays responding to his 'successes',

including *Ulysses*, *The Adventures in Madrid* by Mary Pix (1706), and Addison's *Rosamond* (1707). All three were Queen's Theatre productions. 'Both the creation of a Whig playhouse and the scale of patronage available to individual writers through the Kit-Cat Club created a strong association of drama with the Whig party in this period.'⁶⁸

Most interesting for many of the play's later readers, however, is the imitation of Shakespeare and Fletcher's *Henry VIII; or, All Is True*, with which the play concludes:

Of Royal Race a *British* Queen shall rise,
Great, Gracious, Pious, Fortunate and Wise;
To distant Lands she shall extend her Fame,
And leave to latter Times a mighty Name:
Tyrants shall fall, and faithless Kings shall bleed,
And groaning Nations by her Arms be freed.
But chief this happy Land her Care shall prove,
And find from her a more than Mother's Love.
From Hostile Rage she shall preserve it free,
Safe in the Compass of her ambient Sea:
Tho' fam'd her Arms in many a cruel Fight,
Yet most in peaceful Arts she shall delight,
And her chief Glory shall be to UNITE.
Picts, Saxons, Angles, shall no more be known,
But *Briton* be the noble Name alone.
With Joy their antient Hate they shall forego,
While Discord hides her baleful Head below:
Mercy, and Truth, and Right she shall maintain,
And ev'ry Virtue croud to grace her Reign:
Auspicious Heav'n on all her Days shall smile,
And with Eternal UNION bless her *British* Isle.⁶⁹

Thus Rowe celebrated the major domestic political triumph of 1707, the Union of England and Scotland as Great Britain under Queen Anne, fostering the sense that it was 'meant to be'; and the means by which he does so anticipates both his critical work on Shakespeare, in the form of his edition published two years later, and *Jane Shore*, his imitation of Shakespeare. Much to his credit, Rowe was clearly an independent-minded reader of Shakespeare in an age when the stage versions of Shakespeare's plays were often very different from the available texts in print. While praising Betterton's interpretation of *Hamlet*, for example, in his introductory essay to the 1709 edition of Shakespeare, Rowe suggests that in the adaptation of *The Tempest* by Davenant and Dryden, 'there are some things left out by them, that might, and even ought to have been kept in'. Likewise, he argued that contemporary comic performances of *The Merchant of Venice* went against the seriousness intended by the author.⁷⁰ Rowe is often judged by the high standards

of later editions of Shakespeare, but this capacity for appreciating Shakespeare's neglected qualities would seem to have made him a reasonable choice as editor, out of those candidates practically available to Tonson at the time.

It was out of that prolonged period of adjustment mentioned above that Rowe's next (and penultimate) play, *Jane Shore*, first appeared, to great acclaim, at Drury Lane. It had its premiere on February 2, 1714, seven years after *The Royal Convert*, and had a further seventeen performances over the next month-and-a-half. Paulina Kewes has most fully explored Rowe's astute even-handedness in *Jane Shore*, at a time when a potential crisis of dynastic succession loomed, in giving both Tory and Whig factions in the audience much to admire; this was certainly a factor in its success, as with Addison's *Cato* two years earlier.⁷¹

The famous – or notorious – claim that this was a tragedy written in imitation of Shakespeare's style, and its status as one of the definitive she-tragedies of the eighteenth century, has obscured the extent to which Rowe here built on the dramaturgical practice of his previous, less celebrated plays, *Ulysses* and *The Royal Convert*, just as they develop ideas originating in *Tamerlane* and *The Fair Penitent*. All the same, *Jane Shore* stands apart from its predecessors, not least for the more recent English historical setting and invocation of a Shakespearean ethos – some commented adversely on this claim, seeing fairly enough that Rowe was not an especially Shakespearean dramatist.

Yet the claim makes more sense if we see *Jane Shore* as a modern drama inspired by a vernacular classic. Rowe's plot is intended to complement the action of Shakespeare's history plays while concentrating on its own sphere of dramatic interest. He had Cibber resume the role of Richard, Duke of Gloucester, which he had made his in his own adaptation of Shakespeare, but the real star of the show was Anne Oldfield, who made a speciality of such 'strong central heroines'. She and Barton Booth, who played Hastings, both specialized in 'elegant and dignified styles' to suit the 'general neoclassic taste of the time'.⁷² As before, in the era of Betterton, Barry, and Bracegirdle, Rowe's fortunes were very much tied to those of particular performers, and the appreciation was apparently mutual: Oldfield is meant to have said that 'the best school she had ever known, was only hearing Rowe read her part in his tragedies'.⁷³

As the play begins, Jane Shore (historically, the wife of a gold merchant) is the repentant former mistress of Edward IV, through whom Richard seeks to manipulate her new admirer Lord Hastings. Through Jane's rejection of Hastings's advances, however, and the impulsively jealous actions against her of Hastings's former mistress Alicia, disaster ensues: Hastings goes to his death, repenting himself of his actions; Alicia goes mad; on Richard's vindictive orders, Jane is left to starve on the streets. As in *Ulysses*, Rowe cleverly builds the story around an existing one. Unlike that earlier play, though, *Jane Shore* has the heroine's forgiving husband observing her in disguise, saving her once, but being unable to prevent her eventual demise.

Rowe dedicated the first edition of *Jane Shore* to the son of his late master, the Duke of Queensberry, 'your illustrious Father', in whom Rowe apparently

discerned the 'good Nature' that he saw as 'the Foundation of all other Virtues, either Religious or Civil'. It is always tempting to dismiss such dedicatory tributes as lip service, but in Rowe's case it might be worth bearing in mind a meaningful intellectual connection between the good nature ascribed here to a leading politician and the good nature that Rowe saw as the necessary basis for pity, without which there could be no affective tragedy: 'Good Nature, which is Friendship between Man and Man, good Breeding in Courts, Charity in Religion, and the true Spring of all Beneficence in general. This was a Quality [the Duke of Queensberry] possess'd in as great a Measure as any Gentleman I ever had the Honour to know.'⁷⁴

Such a tribute to the architect of the Treaty of Union between England and Scotland, which Rowe had celebrated in *The Royal Convert*, also chimes with the sense of *Jane Shore* as a reaction to the potential succession crisis identified by Brett Wilson: 'On stage, the national crisis becomes the national she-tragedy.' The fear of Jacobitism, and its attendant threat of a return to Roman Catholicism, haunted the still uncertain Protestant succession, and Rowe's response was characteristic of the Whig tendency to depict such a threat in 'sexed or sexual' terms.⁷⁵

This was a drama that could be interpreted in different ways but crucially, for the long term, it had both an immediate application and a more generalized aspect that made it more than an ephemeral piece of political commentary. A contemporary critic could recognize and admire Rowe's apposite allusions to 'Passages Holy Writ', 'many Lines and elegant Descriptions' being 'transplanted into his Writings, and the Phrase it self preserved with a becoming Dignity, and much the Embellishment of the Poetry'.⁷⁶ At the end of the century, a novelist could deploy something more like the cliché of Jane as she always appeared on stage, concentrating on the visceral impact of a 'poor . . . damsel', 'her hair discomposed, like that of Jane Shore in the play'.⁷⁷ In religious, political, or sexual terms, it was a beguiling combination.

Just over a year later, on April 30, 1715, Rowe's last play, *The Tragedy of the Lady Jane Gray*, appeared at the same theatre, Drury Lane. If *Jane Shore* had seemed politically cautious, this was a decided return to open support for the Whigs in power and anti-Jacobite propaganda – its subject being sixteenth-century English history, as with its predecessor, and a Protestant scheme to thwart the accession of a Catholic monarch. The Duke of Northumberland attempts to alter the succession and make a queen of Lady Jane Gray, the grand-niece of Henry VIII, played by Oldfield. Crucially, this Jane is completely devoid of political ambitions of her own, as is her husband, Northumberland's Guilford Dudley (played by Barton Booth), but acts only to save the country from a potentially oppressive regime (betokened on stage by Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, in another villainous turn from Colley Cibber).

Such was precisely what Jacobitism represented to a politically attuned audience in 1715: 'shall we tamely yield our selves to Bondage?', as Northumberland asks in the opening scene, 'Bow down before these holy purple Tyrants, | And bid 'em tread upon our slavish necks?'⁷⁸ Jane herself asks, 'what remains for

wretched England' once the young King Edward VI dies: 'the wan King of Terrors stalks before us'.⁷⁹ In Act Two, she enters weeping with the news of Edward's death, and his dying request to her: 'do thou be good to *England*'.⁸⁰ Acceding to this wish means acceding to the throne, albeit with an incredible reluctance: 'Take me, Crown me; | Invest me with this Royal Wretchedness; | Let me not know one happy Minute more.'⁸¹

Although it was by no means forgotten and left unperformed over the next three decades, *Lady Jane Gray* was not as well received as its predecessor. The unremittingly hostile Gildon predictably weighed in: 'The Whore found more favour with the Town than the Saint'.⁸² Crude though that is, it is not a judgement contradicted by later readers. John Loftis observes that Rowe's 'success as propagandist was at the price of failure as tragic dramatist': 'the heroine is more passive than usual, the threatening force more malevolent than usual'.⁸³ Laura Brown finds its heroine 'perfectly virtuous, perfectly innocent, and perfectly dull'.⁸⁴ Yet Rowe had certainly played his part in renewing the interest in English history as a theme for eighteenth-century drama, and ends *Lady Jane Gray* on a prophetic note that, as with *The Royal Convert*, suggests that it is not sufficient, paradoxical as it may sound, merely to judge these plays in these literary-critical terms, when their status as both political vehicles and vehicles for leading actors perhaps weighed more heavily to contemporary audiences. *Lady Jane Gray* was acted several more times that season, which also saw *Jane Shore* and *Tamerlane* revived.

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What also goes missing from modern attempts to understand these plays and their effect on eighteenth-century audiences is two perhaps rather 'obvious' qualities Hume has suggested: 'spectacle and emotion'. As readers, we miss out on the 'fabulous scenery and expensive costuming, the charming music, song, and dance', as well as the pleasure of seeing 'favourite actors in role after role'. Likening serious drama of the period to later opera, Hume compares Dryden to the 'schematic philosophizing' of Wagner, Lee and Otway to Verdi's 'wild romps' – and Banks and Rowe to Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci* and Gounod's *Faust*.⁸⁵ At the same time, Hume, Laura Brown and others have noted Rowe's didactic spin on the she-tragedies of Banks and Otway,⁸⁶ so that this sensational quality ought to be combined perhaps with a sense of Rowe as a dramatic moral essayist, whose work is united not only by the religious theme that inspired J. Douglas Canfield's study *Nicholas Rowe and Christian Tragedy* (1977) or politics (sexual or otherwise) but through a characteristic collapsing of these categories. This intermixing is apparent when Loftis, for instance, places Rowe among those dramatists of the early 1700s for whom 'the Catholic Church represents the antithesis of English constitutional monarchy'.⁸⁷ Yet critics have tended to treat Rowe's more domestic dramas as retreats from explicit political engagement. This might have been the secret of their success in the long term, but it seems a dubious proposition in relation to how they were received in his lifetime, not least in the case of *Jane Shore*.⁸⁸

It is perhaps Rowe's talent as a poet that puts his didacticism on a superior level to that of many of his contemporaries. Johnson was not alone in regarding him as an eminently skilled versifier, especially for his clarity and fluency. Aikin thought his diction 'poetical without being bombastic or affected': 'his versification is singularly sweet, and his plays abound with what the French call *tirades* of sentiment, given with force and elegance, and calculated to dwell on the mind'.⁸⁹ 'The golden lines of Rowe are not to be forgotten as models of that kind of verse which approaches the language of conversation, and is adapted to the freedom and expression of dramatic and descriptive poetry', Anna Seward wrote.⁹⁰ Congreve put it most simply: 'If *Addison*, or *Rowe*, or *Prior* write, | We study 'em with Profit and Delight'.⁹¹

Congreve was among the subscribers to Rowe's most sustained exercise in poetic translation: *Lucan's Pharsalia*. Readers had been given a taste of this great work in 1709, when Rowe's translation of the ninth book had appeared in the latest (and last) of Tonson's *Miscellanies*. With work still in progress, Addison spelt out the political application to the present moment of Lucan's epic about bloody civil war in the Roman world brought about by the despotism of Julius Caesar: Lucan is 'the only Author of consideration among the *Latin* Poets, who was not explained for the use of the *Dauphin*, for a very obvious reason; because the whole *Pharsalia* would have been no less than a satyr upon the French form of government'. At the same time, in 1716, Addison suggested that Rowe had 'not only kept up the fire of the original, but delivered the sentiments with greater perspicuity, and in a finer turn of phrase and verse'.⁹² This is not just Augustan arrogance but a comment on Rowe's style – his deliberate smoothing-out of his blustering source. Rowe also adds a conclusion to Lucan's seemingly unfinished work.

Of the opening lines of the poem, Robin Sowerby remarks, in the first of many useful close readings he offers of Rowe's translation in comparison with both its source text and other renderings of Lucan into English, that 'Rowe has not emulated the harsh sound and frequently abrupt rhythm of Lucan's style. His couplets are harmonious and smooth'. Rowe noted that he had 'transpos'd' Lucan's material to provide what Sowerby calls 'the kind of rhetorical climax that is a particular feature of the couplet style of the English Augustans'.⁹³

Emathian Plains with Slaughter cover'd o'er,
And Rage unknown to Civil Wars before,
Establish'd Violence and lawless Might,
Avow'd and hallow'd by the Name of Right,
A Race Renown'd, the World's victorious Lords,
Turn'd on themselves with their own hostile Swords;
Piles against Piles oppos'd in Impious Fight,
And Eagles against Eagles bending Flight,
Of Blood by Friends, by Kindred, Parents, spilt,
One common Horror and promiscuous Guilt,
A shatter'd World in wild Disorder tost,

Leagues, Laws, and Empire, in Confusion lost,
 Of all the Woes which Civil Discords bring,
 And *Rome* o'ercome by *Roman* arms, I sing.⁹⁴

It is understandable that Johnson should praise such lines as these which, neatly balanced though they are, seem to cascade towards the final two words of a long opening sentence. In such passages, Rowe continued to act as the 'modernizer of antiquity', in Hazlitt's not altogether complimentary phrase, giving Lucan something closer to a Dryden-like pace and elegance. This approach could equally well accommodate antithesis-laden debates, action sequences (such as the centurion Scaeva's brutal one-man stand against Pompey's men) and sheer narrative; it also allows for reflective passages of the sort that could appear in one of Rowe's plays, as when Pompey dreams of better days before battle:

Perhaps, when our good Days no longer last,
 The Mind runs backward, and enjoys the past:
 Perhaps, the riddling Visions of the Night
 With Contraries delude our Sight;
 And when fair Scenes of Pleasure they disclose,
 Pain they foretell, and sure ensuing Woes.
 Or was it not, that, since the Fates ordain
Pompey shou'd never see his *Rome* again,
 One last good Office yet they meant to do,
 And gave him in a Dream this parting View?⁹⁵

It has been pointed out that Rowe's *Pharsalia* has long been overshadowed by the better-known translations of the classics by Pope and Dryden. 'At its best', however, Sarah Annes Brown argues, and as this edition shows, 'Rowe's translation attains a level of excellence worthy of his more famous contemporaries.'⁹⁶ Lucan was also, it should be added, the more unusual undertaking, which had only one clumsy precedent as a complete translation, published by Sir Arthur Gorges in 1614, as well as Thomas May's edition of seven of the books in 1627. As poet and playwright, Nicholas Rowe continues to offer an idiosyncratic reflection of his times – and a subject for study that is far from being exhausted yet. His *Pharsalia*, as Johnson said, still 'deserves more notice than it obtains, and as it is more read will be more esteemed'.⁹⁷ This edition of the plays and poems of this important figure in the history of literature – Nicholas Rowe, the 'lost Augustan', the most significant playwright and poet of his generation – places his works most fully before the reader to obtain more notice for them, and more esteem.

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The categorization of Rowe's drama as 'early', 'middle period', and 'late' assumes a kind of trajectory of which, being ignorant of the extent of his life and the timing

of his death, he was unaware. The time span covering these three periods is necessarily brief, being fifteen years. It is a chronological convenience to group these plays as we have done. That said, the three volumes of Rowe's drama do show three distinctive characteristic modes: the political, the experimental, and the historical. In retrospect, these modes can be described as early, middle period, and late, and the convenience of these labels also has some descriptive merit in it. It is to be hoped that through the editors' introductions and the texts of the plays the grouping of these plays thus in these volumes will stimulate further thought about the categorization and distinctive aspects of Rowe's drama more generally.

In this edition, the plays and poems are grouped according to their date of composition and performance in order to show Rowe's development as a playwright and poet, but the last lifetime editions of the plays are used for the texts whereas first lifetime editions are used for the poems, complicating in interesting ways what the edition tells us (see 'A note on the editorial policy for the edition'). In the case of *Tamerlane*, for example, this means that the prologue from the 1716 revival is also included (appendix B); the first volume includes too the dedication to the Earl of Warwick from 1714 (appendix A). With the publication of *Tragedies* (1714) Rowe presents himself as a playwright in mid-career, newly conscious that by 1714 he was in the middle of 'A Career', which was to change (although he did not know that then) and be valorized by the appointment to the poet laureateship in 1715. The double perspective in this edition raises questions about the trajectory of Rowe's public career which his early death foreshortened but which readers of this edition may now consider in a more informed way than readers of *Tragedies* were able to, considering Rowe's lifetime's work in the edition as a whole.

Notes

- 1 Richard Cumberland, *Memoirs of Richard Cumberland* (London: Lackington, Allen & Co, 1806), pp. 59–60.
- 2 John Aikin, *General Biography; or Lives, Critical and Historical, of the Most Eminent Persons of All Ages, Countries, Conditions, and Professions*, ten vols (London: John Stockdale et al, 1813), vol. 8, p. 640.
- 3 Giles Jacob, *The Poetical Register: or, The Lives and Characters of the English Dramatick Poets* (London: E. Curll, 1719), pp. 212–213.
- 4 William Hazlitt, 'Covent Garden, March 9, 1816', *The Selected Writings of William Hazlitt*, ed. Duncan Wu, vol. 3: *A View of the English Stage* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1998), p. 119.
- 5 Arthur Sherbo, 'Rowe, Nicholas (1674–1718)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (ODNB)*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, sixty vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), vol. 47, pp. 1000–1003. www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24203.
- 6 See, for a modern example or three, Andrew Murphy, *Shakespeare in Print: A History and Chronology of Shakespeare Publishing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Don-John Dugas, *Marketing the Bard: Shakespeare in Performance and Print 1660–1740* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2006); and Peter Holland's edition of *The Works of William Shakespeare, edited by Nicholas Rowe, 1709* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999).
- 7 Samuel Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 91.

- 8 Samuel Johnson, 'Rowe', in Roger Lonsdale (ed.), *Lives of the Poets*, four vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), vol. 2, pp. 205–206.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 205.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 205.
- 11 David Worrall, *Celebrity, Performance, Reception: British Georgian Theatre as Social Assemblage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 1.
- 12 Annibel Jenkins, *Nicholas Rowe* (Boston: Twayne, 1977), p. 147.
- 13 Sherbo, 'Rowe', and *ODNB* search.
- 14 James Welwood, 'The Preface giving some account of Lucan and his works, and of Mr Rowe', in Lucan, *The Civil War*, translated by Nicholas Rowe and edited by Sarah Annes Brown and Charles Martindale (London: J. M. Dent, 1998), p. lxxi.
- 15 Stephen Hales, 'Some Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Nicholas Rowe, Esq.', *Musarum Lachrymae: or Poems to the Memory of Nicholas Rowe* (London: E. Curl, 1719), pp. 4–5.
- 16 Pope to Caryll, 20 September [1713], *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, ed. George Sherburn, five vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), vol. 1, p. 190.
- 17 5 October 1715, in John Dennis, *Original Letters: Familiar, Moral and Critical*, two vols (London: W. Mears, 1721), vol. 1, p. 20.
- 18 Sherbo, 'Rowe', p. 1001.
- 19 *A Catalogue of the Library of Nicholas Rowe, Esq; Deceas'd, Late POET-LAUREAT to His Majesty* ([London]: 'Catalogues to be had of Mr. Chetwood in Russel-street, Covent-garden' et al.), 3 and 5. In the list of Rowe's folios, item 15 is listed as '*Spondanus* Homer', published in Basil, n. d., 3. This short title refers to the *Homeri quae extant omnia . . . cum latina versione omnium quae circumferuntur emendatiss. aliquot locis iam castigatiore . . . perpetuis . . . in Iliada simul et Odysseam J. Spondani . . . commentariis* (Basil, 1583; 1606). Item 85 is 'Book of Martyrs, 3 vol. – 1684', 5. This short title refers to John Fox, *Acts and Monuments of Matters Most Special and Memorable Happening in the Church: With an Universal History of the Same* (London: Company of Stationers, 1684).
- 20 Stephen Bernard (ed.), *The Literary Correspondences of the Tonsons* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2015), p. 38.
- 21 *Musarum Lachrymae*, p. 5.
- 22 Johnson, *Lives of the Poets*, pp. 585–587. As Johnson notes, it is unclear whether this was an act of petty revenge against a known Whig or an instance of the minister's 'odd way'.
- 23 Sherbo, 'Rowe', pp. 1001–1002.
- 24 Aikin, *General Biography*, vol. 7, p. 387.
- 25 See especially Table 5.5, 'Principal Single Author Collection Reprints of Post-1660 Playwrights, by Sub-period', in Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume, *The Publication of Plays in London 1660–1800: Playwrights, Publishers, and the Market* (London: British Library, 2015), p. 226.
- 26 Table 5.3, 'Most Frequently Reprinted Singleton Plays from Eight Sub-periods', in Milhous and Hume, *Publication of Plays*, pp. 216–217.
- 27 Judith Milhous, *Thomas Betterton and the Management of Lincoln's Inn Fields 1695–1708* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1979), pp. 51ff.
- 28 Shirley Strum Kenny in *British Theatre and the Other Arts, 1660–1800* (Washington, DC: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1984), 'Opera in London, 1695–1706', p. 77.
- 29 See David Roberts, *Thomas Betterton: The Greatest Actor of the Restoration Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 169.
- 30 *The Post-Boy*, 14–16 May 1700; quoted by Kenny, p. 76. *The Prophetess: or, The history of Dioclesian* (ESTC R2373) was Betterton's adaptation of Fletcher and Massinger's tragicomedy, 'after the manner of an opera', as the title page claims.

- 31 See Janet Clare, *Drama of the English Republic, 1649–60* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), for the texts and an account of Sir William Davenant's experiments with hybrid dramas consisting of sung and spoken dialogue.
- 32 Kenny, p. 76.
- 33 Rowe, *Ambitious Step-mother* (London: Peter Buck, 1701), 'Prologue', pp. 11, 12, 13–14, 18–21.
- 34 Rowe, *Ambitious Step-mother*, Epilogue, pp. 27–28.
- 35 Rowe, *Royal Convert* (London: J. Tonson, 1708), Prologue, pp. 26–32.
- 36 Colley Cibber, *An Apology for the Life of Mr Colley Cibber; Comedian* (London: printed by John Watts for the author, 1740), pp. 255–256. Cibber mistakenly says Rowe's lines come from one of his early prologues.
- 37 Milhous, *Thomas Betterton*, p. 144.
- 38 Milhous and Hume, *The London Stage, 1660–1800: A New Version of Part 2, 1700–1729*, 5; and quotation from William Morley, Cowper MSS, HMC 12th Report, Part II, vol. 2, pp. 434, 1.
- 39 Rowe, *Ambitious Step-mother*, p. 8.
- 40 Ibid, Sig. A2v.
- 41 Anon., *A Comparison Between the Two Stages* (London: [s.n.], 1702), p. 181.
- 42 Ibid, Sig. A2v–A3r.
- 43 John Downes, *Roscus Anglicanus, or an Historical Review of the Stage* (London: s.n., 1708), p. 95.
- 44 Rowe, *Tamerlane* (London: Jacob Tonson, 1702), Sig. B1r–B1v.
- 45 Milhous and Hume, *London Stage*, 'Season of 1701–1702', p. 63.
- 46 'To Caleb D'Anvers', *Country Journal*, 1739.
- 47 Johnson, *Lives of the Poets*, p. 200.
- 48 Anon., *Religio Poetae: or, A Satyr on the Poets* (London: s.n., 1703), p. 10.
- 49 Laura Brown, *English Dramatic Form, 1660–1760: An Essay in Generic History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 149.
- 50 Rowe, *The Fair Penitent* (London: Jacob Tonson, 1703), Sig. A4r.
- 51 Downes, *Roscus Anglicanus*, p. 95.
- 52 Rowe, *Ambitious Step-mother*, Sig. A2v.
- 53 Advertisement in the *Daily Courant*, quoted in Milhous and Hume, *London Stage*, 'Season of 1702–1703', p. 104.
- 54 'Mr Powell played Lothario, and one Warren, his Dresser, claimed a Right of lying for his Master, and performing the dead Part of Lothario, which he proposed to act to the best Advantage; tho' Powell was ignorant of the Matter. The Fifth Act began, and went on, as usual, with Applause; but about the Middle of the distressful Scene, Powell called aloud for his Man Warren, who as loudly replied, from the Bier on the Stage, Here, Sir! Powell (who, as I said before, was ignorant of the Part his Man was doing) repeated, without Loss of Time, Come here this Moment, you Son of a Whore! or I'll break all the Bones in your Skin. Warren knew his hasty Temper; therefore, without any Reply, jump'd off, with all his Sables about him, which, unfortunately, were tied fast to the Handles of the Bier, and dragg'd after him. But this was not all; the Laugh and Roar began in the Audience, till it frighten'd poor Warren so much, that, with the Bier at his Tail, he threw down Calista (Mrs Barry), and overwhelm'd her with the Table, Lamp, Book, Bones, together with all the Lumber of the Charnel-house. He tugg'd, till he broke off his Trammels, and made his Escape; and the Play, at once, ended with immoderate Fits of Laughter: Even the grave Mr Betterton Smil'd in the Tumult, and enjoy'd the Storm. But he would not let the Fair Penitent be play'd any more that Season, till poor Warren's Misconduct was something forgot' (William Chetwood, *A General History of the Stage* (London: W. Owen, 1749), pp. 253–254, quoted in Milhous and Hume, *London Stage*, 'Season of 1702–1703', pp. 92–93).

- 55 Hume, *The Development of English Drama in the Late Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 463. *The Biter* has earlier champions, too, as summarized by Betterton's nineteenth-century biographer, Robert W. Lowe: 'Dr. Johnson is very contemptuous to *The Biter*, and declares that Rowe was a failure as a comedy-writer; but I agree with old [John] Genest thoroughly in his commendation of this piece. It is a brisk bustling farce, with an amusing plot, good humorous characters, and fairly bright dialogue' (Robert William Lowe, *Thomas Betterton* (London: Kegan Paul, 1891), p. 172).
- 56 Milhous, *Thomas Betterton*, pp. 174ff.
- 57 *Ibid.*, p. 171.
- 58 'The Kit-Cat Club . . . have built a Temple for their Dagon, the new Play-House in the Hay-Market' (Daniel Defoe, *The Rehearsal of Observator*, 5 May 1705, quoted in Bernard Harris's introduction to *The Relapse* by John Vanbrugh (London: A. & C. Black, 1971), p. xv).
- 59 Roberts, *Thomas Betterton*, p. 170.
- 60 Milhous, *Thomas Betterton*, p. 185.
- 61 Cibber, *An Apology*, pp. 257–259.
- 62 *Ibid.*, p. 259.
- 63 *Ibid.*, pp. 259–260.
- 64 Downes, *Roscius Anglicanus*, p. 48.
- 65 Milhous, *Thomas Betterton*, p. 192.
- 66 Paula R. Backscheider, 'Barry, Elizabeth (1656x8–1713)', *ODNB*, vol. 4, pp. 125–128.
- 67 Rowe, *Royal Convert*, 'Prologue', pp. 33–39.
- 68 Abigail Williams, 'Patronage and Whig Literary Culture', in 'Cultures of Whiggism': *New Essays on English Literature and Culture in the Long Eighteenth Century*, ed. David Womersley, Paddy Bullard and Abigail Williams (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 2005), pp. 149–172 (p. 159).
- 69 Rowe, *The Royal Convert*, 5.2.376–96.
- 70 William Shakespeare, *The Works of Mr. William Shakespear*, ed. Rowe (London: printed for Jacob Tonson, 1709), 'Some Account of the Life, &c. of Mr. William Shakespear'. For Rowe's remarks on *The Tempest*, see pp. xxiv–xxv, and for *The Merchant of Venice* see pp. xix–xx.
- 71 Paulina Kewes, '"The State Is Out of Tune": Nicholas Rowe's *Jane Shore* and the Succession Crisis', *Huntington Library Quarterly* 64 (2001), pp. 301–321.
- 72 Marvin A. Carlson, *Voltaire and the Theatre of the Eighteenth Century* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998), p. 28.
- 73 Jonathan Richardson, *Richardsoniana: or, Occasional Reflections on the Moral Nature of Man* (London: J. Dodsley, 1776), p. 77.
- 74 Rowe, *The Tragedy of Jane Shore* (London: Bernard Lintott, 1714), Sig. A2r.
- 75 Brett D. Wilson, 'Jane Shore and the Jacobites: Nicholas Rowe, the Pretender, and the National She-Tragedy', *English Literary History* 72:4 (Winter, 2005), pp. 823–843 (p. 823).
- 76 Anon., *A Review of the Tragedy of Jane Shore* (London: J. Roberts, 1714), p. 10.
- 77 Anon., *The Adventures of Lucifer in London* (London: [s.n.], 1799), p. 137.
- 78 Rowe, *The Tragedy of the Lady Jane Gray* (London: Bernard Lintott, 1715), p. 3.
- 79 *Ibid.*, pp. 9–10.
- 80 *Ibid.*, p. 13.
- 81 *Ibid.*, p. 36.
- 82 Gildon, *Remarks on Mr. Rowe's Tragedy of the Lady Jane Gray* (London: J. Roberts, 1715), p. 12.
- 83 John Loftis, *The Politics of Drama in Augustan England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 80.

- 84 Brown, *English Dramatic Form*, p. 154.
- 85 Hume, *The Development of English Drama*, pp. 226–227.
- 86 ‘[F]ar more than Otway or Banks, Rowe accompanies pathos with overt and explicit didacticism’ (ibid., 219). In *Jane Shore*, Rowe ‘fully exploits the seemingly affective resources of the action, but he makes that pathos moral’ (Brown, *English Dramatic Form*, p. 153).
- 87 Loftis, *The Politics of Drama*, p. 79.
- 88 Kewes offers several examples at the outset of “‘The State Is Out of Tune’”, p. 301.
- 89 Aikin, *General Biography*, vol. VIII, p. 640.
- 90 Anna Seward, 6 May 1799, in *Letters of Anna Seward: Written Between the Years 1784 and 1807*, six vols (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable, 1811), vol. 5, p. 432.
- 91 William Congreve, ‘Of Pleasing; An Epistle to Sir Richard Temple’, in *The Works of William Congreve*, ed. D. F. McKenzie, three vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), vol. 2, p. 407.
- 92 Joseph Addison, *The Freeholder* 40 (7 May 1716).
- 93 Robin Sowerby, *The Augustan Art of Poetry: Augustan Translation of the Classics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 177, 179.
- 94 Rowe, *Lucan’s Pharsalia* (London: Jacob Tonson, [1719]), p. 3.
- 95 Ibid., p. 264.
- 96 Sarah Annes Brown, ‘Nicholas Rowe’s Translation of the *Pharsalia* and Its Predecessors’, in Lucan, *The Civil War*, translated by Rowe, edited by Sarah Annes Brown and Charles Martindale (London: J. M. Dent, 1998), p. xlii.
- 97 Johnson, *Lives of the Poets*, p. 206.

NICHOLAS ROWE

A Chronology

Stephen Bernard and Michael Caines

Abbreviations

- DLB* J. Douglas Canfield and Alfred W. Hesse, 'Nicholas Rowe', *Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Dramatists: Second Series. Dictionary of Literary Biography*, vol. 84 (Detroit: Gale Research Co., 1989), pp. 262–289
- NR* Nicholas Rowe
- ODNB* Arthur Sherbo, 'Rowe, Nicholas (1674–1718), poet and playwright', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, sixty vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), vol. 47, pp. 1000–1003

Chronology

- 1674**
June 20 NR born 'in the house of his maternal grandfather, Jasper Edwards, at Little Barford, Bedfordshire' (*ODNB*)
- 1686**
NR is a private pupil by now of the master of the charity school at Highgate, London (*DLB*)
- 1688**
NR elected a King's Scholar at Westminster School, 'where he came under the charge of the formidable Dr Richard Busby' (*ODNB*)
- 1691**
Aug. 4 NR entered as a student at the Middle Temple (*ODNB*), taking possession of his father's chambers (*DLB*)
- 1692**
April 30 NR's father, John, a London barrister of the Middle Temple, dies; NR comes into an income of £300 p.a. and inherits his father's chambers (*ODNB*); this was a 'modest income', derived from both Devon property and Middle Temple chambers (*DLB*)

1693

July 6 NR marries Antonia, daughter of Anthony Parsons, ‘one of the auditors of the revenue’ (*ODNB*)

1695

Nov. 15 NR’s son John baptized at St Dunstan in the West, Fleet Street; the Rowes have apparently moved in with the Parsons family in their house on Fetter Lane (*DLB*)

1696

May NR called to the bar, thus completing his studies in less time than the other eleven who finished, out of the sixty-five who enrolled in 1691 (*DLB*)

June 22/23 NR’s Devon properties entailed to his son (*DLB*)

Oct. 31 NR’s son buried (*DLB*)

1698

William Shippen’s Latin verse ‘Epistola ad N. R.’ is published; probably written three or four years earlier, when he and NR were both at the Middle Temple; Shippen had also studied at Westminster (*DLB*)

1699

Aug. 24 NR’s second son John baptized (*ODNB*, which reports that six more children followed but died within a year of birth), at St Andrew, Holborn, since NR and Antonia are now residing at Blewitts Court in that parish, neighbouring the previous one (*DLB*)

1700

After May NR relinquishes chambers (*DLB*)

Dec. *The Ambitious Step-mother* performed at Lincoln’s Inn Fields (*DLB*)

1701

Jan. 29 *The Ambitious Step-mother* published by Peter Buck (*DLB*)

July *A New Miscellany of Original Poems, on Several Occasions* ‘includes poems by Rowe and others’ (*DLB*)

Dec. *Tamerlane* performed at Lincoln’s Inn Fields, and published by Jacob Tonson (*DLB*)

1703

Poetical Miscellanies: The Fifth Part. Containing a Collection of Original Poems, With Several New Translations, By the Most Eminent Hands, edited, with contributions, by NR (*DLB*)

Poems on Several Occasions: Together with some Odes in Imitation of Mr. Cowley’s Stile and Manner ‘includes poems by Rowe and others’ (*DLB*)

May *The Fair Penitent* performed at Lincoln’s Inn Fields and published by Tonson

1704

Nov./Dec. *The Biter*, ‘a very bad farce’ (*ODNB*), performed at Lincoln’s Inn Fields (*DLB*)

1705

NR writes prologue for *The Gamester* by Susanna Centlivre (DLB)
The Biter published by Tonson

Nov. 23 *Ulysses*, 'a classical tragedy . . . which proved mildly successful, with Betterton taking the title role four years before his death in 1710' (ODNB), performed at the Queen's Theatre (DLB)

1706

Ulysses published by Tonson (DLB)

Oct. 31 *The Golden Verses of Pythagoras* translated by NR in *The Life of Pythagoras, with His Symbols and Golden Verses, Together with the Life of Hierocles, and His Commentaries upon the Verses. Collected out of the Choisest Manuscripts, and tr. into French, with annotations. By M. [André] Dacier. Now Done into English* (Tonson) (DLB)

1707

Jan. 6 *A Poem upon the Late Glorious Successes of Her Majesty's Arms, &c.* published by Tonson (DLB)

Nov. 25 *The Royal Convert* performed at the Queen's Theatre (DLB)

1708

'Some Account of Boileau's Writings, and of this Translation', in *Boileau's Lutrin: A Mock-Heroic Poem*, translated by John Ozell (R. Burrough & J. Baker, E. Sanger and E. Curll) (DLB)

The Royal Convert published by Tonson (DLB)

1709

'Of the Manner of Living with Great Men', an 'original chapter' added to *Characters: or The Manner of the Age, with the Moral Characters of Theophrastus . . . By Monsieur [Jean] de La Bruyère. Made English by Several Hands*, fifth edition (Curll, Sanger and J. Pemberton) (DLB)

The Works of Mr. William Shakespear, edited by NR (Tonson) (DLB)

Contributes translation of ninth book of *Pharsalia* to the sixth part of Tonson's *Poetical Miscellanies*, also edited by NR (Tonson) (DLB)

Feb. 5 NR appointed under-secretary to James Douglas, the second duke of Queensberry, secretary of state for Scotland (ODNB)

April 7 *Epilogue Spoken by Mrs Barry, April the 7th, 1709. At a Representation of Love for Love. For the Benefit of Mr. Betterton At His Leaving the Stage* (Sanger and Curll) (DLB)

1710

Squire Bickerstaff Detected; or, The Astrological Impostor Convicted, by John Partridge, includes undetermined contribution by NR (no publisher given; DLB)

1712

Callipaedia . . . With Some Other Pieces. Written in Latin by Claudius Quillet. Made English by N. Rowe, Esq. (Sanger and Curll) (DLB)

Feb. 13 Death of NR's first wife Antonia

1713

‘On the Last Judgment, and Happiness of the Saints in Heaven’, in *Sacred Miscellanies, or Divine Poems upon Several Subjects* (Curll) (DLB)

Sept. 20

Pope to John Caryl: ‘I am just returned from the country, with Mr. Rowe did me the favour to accompany me and to pass a week at Binfield. I need not tell you how much a man of his turn could not but entertain me, but I must acquaint you there is a vivacity and gayety [sic] of disposition almost peculiar to that gentleman, which renders it impossible to part from him without that uneasiness and chagrin which generally succeeds all great pleasures.’ (See *Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, ed. George Sherburn, five vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), vol. 1, p. 190; quoted in *ODNB*)

1714

A Collection of Original Poems, Translations and Imitations, by Mr. Prior, Mr. Rowe, Dr. Swift, and Other Eminent Hands (Curll) (DLB)

Feb. 2

The Tragedy of Jane Shore, with an epilogue by Pope (*ODNB*), performed at Drury Lane, and published by Bernard Lintot (DLB)

Poems on Several Occasions. By N. Rowe, Esq. (Curll) (DLB)

Maecenas. Verses Occasion’d by the Honours Conferr’d on the Right Honourable the Earl of Halifax. By N. Rowe, Esq. (Lintot)

Ajax of Sophocles. Translated from the Greek, with Notes, possibly translated by NR (Lintot)

1715

April 20

The Tragedy of the Lady Jane Gray performed at Drury Lane, and published by Lintot (DLB)

Aug. 11

NR appointed Poet Laureate after death of Nahum Tate, ‘and brought dignity and respectability to that position, virtues which his predecessors had not shown’ (*ODNB*)

Oct.

NR appointed one of the land surveyors of the customs of the Port of London (*ODNB*)

Prince of Wales appoints NR clerk of his council (*ODNB*)

Charles Gildon, *Remarks on Mr. Rowe’s Tragedy of the Lady Jane Gray* (‘The Whore found more favour with the Town than the Saint’)

The Poetical Works of Nicholas Rowe, Esq. (i.e. *Poems on Several Occasions* bound with the 1712 *Callipaedia*, published by Curll) (DLB)

1716

‘Verses upon the Sickness and Recovery of the Right Honourable Robert Walpole, Esq’ in *State Poems* (J. Roberts) (DLB)

Ode for the New Year MDCCXVI. By N. Rowe (Tonson) (DLB)

NR marries Anne, daughter of Joseph Devenish of Buckham, Dorset (*ODNB*)

- May 7 Addison in *The Freeholder*, no. 40, regarding Rowe's Lucan translation, says NR 'had delivered sentiments [Lucan's] with greater perspicuity, and in a finer turn of phrase and verse' [than Lucan himself] (quoted in *ODNB*)
- Dec. 17 *The Cruel Gift* by Susanna Centlivre performed with an epilogue by NR (*ODNB*)
- 1717**
- 'The Episode of Glaucus and Scylla', translated by NR, in *Ovid's Metamorphoses in Fifteen Books. Translated by the most Eminent Hands. Adorn'd with Sculptures*, edited by Samuel Garth (Tonson) (*DLB*)
- Oct. 6 Cibber's *Non-juror* performed with prologue by NR
- 1718**
- Daughter Charlotte born (*ODNB*)
- May Lord Chancellor appoints NR clerk of the presentations (*ODNB*)
- Dec. 6 NR dies, aged forty-four
- Dec. 19 NR buried in Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey
- 1719**
- Lucan's Pharsalia* posthumously published (Tonson), with a preface by Rowe's physician and friend Dr James Welwood, and a dedication to George I by Rowe's widow 'who was rewarded with a pension of £40 a year' (*ODNB*)

A NOTE ON THE EDITORIAL POLICY FOR THE EDITION

Stephen Bernard

Rowe seems to have written with two audiences in mind: his plays he wrote for posterity, albeit out of commercial – performance and print – considerations, but his poetry – with the singular exceptions of the ode to Godolphin and *Lucan's Pharsalia* – he wrote to the moment. It has therefore been decided to take as copy texts for the plays the last lifetime editions of each, and for the poetry the first lifetime editions of each – and the first posthumous edition of the *Pharsalia*.

At the end of each volume of the plays, at the end of the *Pharsalia*, and at the end of the poetry, the collations for the texts can be found. These are comprehensive, but, following the practice of W. W. Greg, deal exclusively with substantive changes and not accidentals, except where these alter meanings in a substantial way.¹

Virtually all of the collations to the poetry – with two exceptions – reveal compositors' changes or errors which are therefore not to be treated as authorial; the other changes may not be authorial either. The collations to the plays show Rowe making significant alterations to the texts and many can therefore be treated as both authorial and significant. Their editors discuss important representative instances of this in the textual notes to each of the plays.

This edition deals with the lifetime changes to Rowe's texts. Other important early editions are *The Works of Nicholas Rowe, Esq.; . . . Containing His Poems, and Translations; With Some Account of His Life Prefix'd*, 2nd edn, three vols (London: printed for J. Darby, A. Bettesworth, F. Fayram, J. Tonson, B. Lintot, J. Osborn and T. Longman, J. Pemberton, C. Rivington, J. Hooke, F. Clay, J. Batley, E. Symon, Richard, James and Bethel Wellington, 1728), and *The Miscellaneous Works of Nicholas Rowe, Esq.*, 3rd edn (London: W. Feales, 1733). Some of the editors of the plays have something to say about the later publication histories of them in the histories included with their textual notes. Please note that works are cited in full the first time they appear in this edition and subsequently in short-title form.

Note

- 1 See W. W. Greg, 'The Rationale of Copy-Text', *Studies in Bibliography*, 3 (1950–1), pp. 19–36.

INTRODUCTION TO *THE AMBITIOUS STEP-MOTHER*, *TAMERLANE*, AND *THE FAIR PENITENT*

Rebecca Bullard and John McTague

Pressure, politeness, and politics

When Nicholas Rowe became a playwright at the very beginning of the eighteenth century, London playhouses were under significant cultural and financial pressure. Calls for reform of the stage, led by the nonjuring clergyman Jeremy Collier, formed part of the broader movement for the 'reformation of manners' that gained momentum through the final years of William's reign and the first years of Queen Anne's.¹ The movement used practical action as well as the publication of tracts and pamphlets to achieve its ends: actors were arrested for uttering indecencies and blasphemous oaths on stage, prosecutions based on the evidence of informers who infiltrated the playhouses.² Government interference in the business of theatre – for instance, proscribing the use of masks by women in the audience – cannot have helped the playhouses' already precarious financial position.³ Competition for audience share had recently led both Lincoln's Inn Fields and Drury Lane to invest heavily in expensive theatrical entertainments.⁴ The experiment was not a success and by the spring of 1701, just after the first performance of *The Ambitious Step-mother*, Lincoln's Inn Fields 'reached its lowest point' and seemed on the brink of dissolution.⁵

Rowe derided the popular taste for entertainment rather than serious drama,⁶ but it is difficult to gauge the extent to which he felt under commercial or cultural pressure at the beginning of his writing career. Perhaps his ideologically conservative plays, which punish any kind of female sexual desire with death even as they incite the audience's pity, respond in part to the new moral climate of early eighteenth-century London. Perhaps the movement away from baroque spectacle (for instance, the 'Temple of the Sun' scene (3.3) in *The Ambitious Step-mother*) towards bourgeois tragedy, in which affective power derives from the relationships between characters rather than exotic scenes, reflects financial constraints as well as changing tastes. While the tangible impact of these very immediate concerns remains elusive, however, we can say with more confidence that Rowe's

plays engage with some of the early eighteenth century's most distinctive cultural interests and idioms, including discourses of politeness and partisan politics.

Rowe's early tragedies exemplify many of the qualities associated with the concept of politeness.⁷ Their refined language, which even Rowe's critics praised, reflects a 'consciousness of form' particularly evident in the 'dextrous management of . . . Words and Actions'.⁸ Praise for moderation rather than excess, for sociability rather than solecism, and an emphasis on the importance of polished behaviour instead of, or as well as, birth and learning are manifest throughout Rowe's plays, in both positive examples (Tamerlane's moderation, Artaban's valourousness) and negative ones (Calista's self-absorption, Bajazet and Artemisa's tyrannical excess). Designed to evoke feelings of pity more than terror, Rowe's plays are written for an audience whose 'good nature' is, itself, a manifestation of polite tendencies.⁹

The complexity and extent of Rowe's engagement with politics in these tragedies has hitherto been underemphasized. Dismissing the 'political allegory' of *Tamerlane* as 'just a paean to William III', Judith Milhous suggested that '[p]olitics entered few of the plays in these years [1698–1702]; rather the political stresses and strains of the times helped contribute to a period of quiescence in the theatre'.¹⁰ This does justice neither to *Tamerlane* nor the other plays in this volume; while they are often careful, they are rarely quiescent. As the following discussions show, not only do all three address political concerns, they do so in ways that belie Rowe's posthumous reputation as a dyed-in-the-wool Hanoverian Whig. These plays are striking for the plenitude of political perspectives on display. For instance, there are characters who: favour government by popular consent; champion divine right monarchy; stand up for meritocracy; insist on the significance of noble blood and inborn virtue; neo-stoically accept death; uphold the virtues of patrilineal succession; challenge patriarchal authority; steadfastly uphold the rule of law; uphold the spirit but not the letter of that law; or attribute all to the guiding hand of providence. With the exception of a general abhorrence of Hobbesian self-interest, these divergent political positions are not favoured or dismissed with consistency, and often coexist within single plays. Interested in both the theory and practice of politics, Rowe explores the collateral damage of political change without necessarily indicting that process. His manifold engagement with the revolution of 1688 and its legacy suggests not a staunch revolution Whig but a playwright conscious that events which have 'good' effects are not necessarily 'good' in and of themselves, and are certainly not so for all.

The Ambitious Step-mother

Introduction

In some ways, Nicholas Rowe's first play, *The Ambitious Step-mother*, looks back nostalgically to the reign of Charles II. 'Majestick Tragedy shou'd once agen | In Purple Pomp adorn the swelling Scene', declares the Prologue (ll. 25–6).

The play lives up to this promise, offering audiences the kind of exotic settings, high-flying rhetoric, affective power, and – at least to some extent – conservative political ideology that had come to characterize the heroic mode.¹¹ Artaxerxes, wrongly exiled oldest son of the dying king, Arsaces, is a self-declared hero (1.1.368). His unshakeable belief that kings are petty gods and that the right of patrilineal succession is indefeasible aligns him with pro-Stuart defenders of monarchical prerogative.¹² His death by suicide at the end of the play, however, gestures towards the demise of an old political and theatrical order at the beginning of a new century.

If Artaxerxes belongs to the absolutist, Carolean world of heroic drama, other characters embody political opinions closely associated with the revolution of 1688. Artaxerxes's father-in-law, the soldier Memnon, rehearses a number of popular arguments in favour of limited monarchy.¹³ Memnon promotes government by popular consent, insisting that, 'in the Infant World, first Governments | Began by choice' (2.1.101–2).¹⁴ Memnon is no republican: his support for Artaxerxes rests on his patrilineal right to rule – a 'Right inroll'd among those Laws | Which keep the World's vast Frame in beauteous Order' (2.1.127–8). This right, however, is not a licence for tyranny. Complaining at his exile, Memnon asserts that 'self-defence' is 'the eldest Law of Nature' (2.1.41–2).¹⁵ What is so remarkable about *The Ambitious Step-mother* is that Artaxerxes and Memnon are not enemies but friends and allies. The differences between their political visions are quietly elided as they oppose a common enemy: the cynical Queen Artemisa and her henchmen, Mirza and Magas. At a time when the 'rage of party' was consuming British politics, Rowe brings together characters with apparently divergent ideological commitments against the nihilistic threat of self-interest.¹⁶

Like his dramatic predecessors, Rowe exploits the conventions of heroic drama as much for their affective as for their political impact. Back in the 1680s, the Prologue tells us, the tears of the 'weeping Fair . . . did moving Otway's Labours crown, | And made the poor Monimia's Grief their own' (ll. 11, 13–14). Monimia, tragic heroine of Thomas Otway's *The Orphan* (1680), commits suicide after discovering that she has been the unwitting victim of a bed trick that has led her into an incestuous encounter with her brother-in-law.¹⁷ Rowe reconfigures Otway's tactics for provoking the audience's pity, in particular denying his female character any sexual experience. According to Rowe (and in the teeth of his critics) the violent death of the innocent Amestris is an 'occasion for Compassion' precisely because her virtue is unimpeachable.¹⁸ Rowe does not, however, leave Restoration stage conventions behind entirely. The modest Cleone commits suicide while dressed as a boy, the actress's legs on show in a breeches part.¹⁹ Even as he develops a new and particular interest in the abject suffering of innocent women, Rowe retains many dramatic devices that would have been familiar to earlier theatre audiences.²⁰

The Ambitious Step-mother, then, straddles periods in stage history and categories of tragedy. It looks back towards the cultural and political world of Carolean

tragedy, both heroic and pathetic. But it also embodies the complex and competing ideological visions of William III's England. Rowe learns his dramatic craft by confronting, combining, and finally exorcising the ghosts of his literary forebears.

Political contexts

The first performance of *The Ambitious Step-mother* in December 1700 took place during a particularly acute succession crisis. King William, who had reigned alone since the death of Queen Mary in 1694, had no children. His nephew and heir, William, Duke of Gloucester, had died at the age of eleven on 27 July 1700. The ousted, Roman Catholic monarch, James II, lay dying in exile in France. The Act of Settlement that would ensure that the British crown passed to the Protestant Hanoverian dynasty, rather than back to the Stuarts, did not become law until 12 June 1701. *The Ambitious Step-mother* responds to Britain's uncertain political future by reflecting, ambivalently, upon its recent political past.²¹

In 1688, according to Whig propagandists, England had rid itself of a particularly ambitious stepmother: Mary of Modena, consort of James II. Having given birth on 10 June that year to a boy, James Francis Edward Stuart, Mary became mother of the heir to the throne – a Roman Catholic heir who supplanted in the line of succession the issue of James's first marriage, the Protestant princesses, Mary and Anne. As soon as the birth was announced, Whig propagandists began to claim that the child was not, in fact, the true son of James II and his wife, but rather a suppositious heir smuggled into the birthing chamber in a bed-warming pan. As it publicized this 'warming-pan scandal', the Whig press portrayed Mary of Modena as corrupt, ambitious, a sexually lascivious and unnatural tool of the Pope and France.²² It would have been easy for an audience accustomed to seeing contemporary political events depicted *à clef* in literary and dramatic texts to connect Rowe's Artemisa with the queen in exile.

It comes as a surprise, then, that Artaban, Artemisa's son, is not the same kind of ambitious, corrupt character as his mother, but rather a vigorous and bold youth who rejects his mother's patronage and resolves to contend with his older brother for a right to claim the throne based on his merit and martial prowess. The emphasis that Artaban places on 'Merit' (2.2.15) and 'Arms' (2.2.194) in fact aligns him closely with William III and the events of the revolution in 1688 that led to the downfall of James II.²³ Other aspects of the play support this interpretation of events. As we have already seen, Artaxerxes, whom Artaban supplants, adopts a particularly conservative line on the divine right of kings, which resonates with pro-Stuart political theory. In this light, Artemisa takes on a new complexion as a figure for the tumult of 1688 itself: a series of events that may have been regrettable in themselves, but that nonetheless offered Britain a new start under a bold and militaristic monarch.

This reading of this play appears to align Rowe neither with the Whig proponents of the revolution who might have warmed to the title of this play, nor with the kind of high Toryism or Jacobitism associated, by 1700, with the

heroic mode, but rather with the ambivalent political group sometimes styled Williamite or pro-revolution Tories.²⁴ These Tories disapproved *per se* of the revolution as a constitutional anomaly, but nonetheless acknowledged that its outcome – the installation of a Protestant monarch on the English throne – was preferable to popish absolutism or civil war.²⁵ Several details of the play's plot and characterization support this reading. Although Artaxerxes and Artaban challenge one another to combat throughout the play, for instance, Artaxerxes ultimately dies at his own hand – a figure for the post-revolution claim that James II had not been deposed by William of Orange but had, rather, abdicated, leaving the throne vacant.²⁶ Aspects of Artaban's character also reflect Tory unease at the means by which William came to power. Unable to woo the virtuous Cleone, Artaban tells her that the goddess of love 'bids me seize thee, | And bear thee as a Victim to her Altar' (3.1.167–8). In the decades after 1688, many Tory writers used rape as a plot device to explore the effects of the revolution of 1688.²⁷ Artaban's threat of violence towards Cleone gestures towards the dark side of his martial valour.

To add to the complex political hermeneutics of *The Ambitious Step-mother*, this play might be read not only as a response to the revolution of 1688, but also as a kind of counterfactual history that looks back to the reign of Charles II. The absent king Arsaces, who lies dying or dead offstage throughout Rowe's play, is faced with a choice similar to that of the ageing Charles II during the Exclusion Crisis of 1679–81. Supporters of Charles's illegitimate son, the Duke of Monmouth, sought to have the King's Roman Catholic brother and heir, James, Duke of York, excluded from the line of succession, and Monmouth recognized as the legitimate heir in his place. Charles, of course, refused to accede to their requests; Arsaces, however, gives in to Artemisa's demands. Just as John Dryden had imagined Monmouth as King David's wayward but noble son Absalom in *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681), so Rowe's play reworks the story of King David and Bathsheba's son, Solomon, to present Artaban as an ethically complex figure: a heroic usurper, a problematic saviour.

The fact that Artaban combines aspects of three profoundly different political referents – the Duke of Monmouth, William III, and James Edward Francis Stuart – is responsible in part for the indeterminacy of the ending of *The Ambitious Step-mother*. Rowe's later female-centred tragedies all end with the death of the eponymous character, and such an ending must surely have been expected where that central character is not only self-interested but also wilfully destructive. Artemisa, however, leaves the stage of her own volition at the end of Act 5, followed, but not detained, by Artaban's men. 'The Queen is depos'd from her Authority by her own Son', Rowe declares confidently in the dedication, 'which, I suppose, will be allowed as the severest Mortification that could happen to a Woman of her Imperious Temper.'²⁸ But the fact that Artemisa remains alive and dangerous suggests that, whether she represents Whig agitators, threatening Jacobites, or a more general sense of revolutionary turmoil, key constitutional issues remain unresolved at the play's end.²⁹ In

December 1700, that irresolution must have spoken to a country waiting to discover its own constitutional fate.

Sources

Rowe insists that ‘the Fable’ of his play ‘has no manner of Relation to any Part of true History’.³⁰ However, Charles Gildon in his lengthy attack on Rowe in *A New Rehearsal, or, Bays the Younger* (1714) notes that the plot of *The Ambitious Step-mother* bears a strong resemblance to the biblical story of King David’s wife, Bathsheba, who, together with the prophet, Nathan, conspired to put Bathsheba’s son Solomon on the throne ahead of his older brother, Adonijah.³¹ Apart from moving the scene of the action from Israel to Persia, Rowe makes a number of small but significant alterations to this biblical analogue. Unlike Bathsheba, who is directed in her plotting by Nathan, Artemisa is more powerful (and successful) than her co-conspirators, Magas and Mirza. Unlike Adonijah, Artaxerxes dies at his own hand rather than being killed by his younger brother. The plot of Rowe’s play, then, accentuates the difference between the guilt of the mother and the innocence of the son. Artaban’s virtue, reinforced by association with the legendarily wise King Solomon, remains relatively untarnished by either political machination or fraternal bloodshed.

Critical reception

In his ‘Life of Rowe’, Samuel Johnson attributed Rowe’s decision to leave the law for a literary career to the favourable reception of *The Ambitious Step-mother*, a play that the prompter, John Downes, reckoned among the best produced during the first decade of the Lincoln’s Inn Fields company, and that Rowe himself declared ‘not [ill] receiv’d’ by the Town.³² Some contemporary criticism was rather more ambivalent. Although *A Comparison Between the Two Stages* (1702) praised the novice author, it claimed that ‘there’s nothing extraordinary in [*The Ambitious Step-mother*] but the Stile’.³³ Other critics were more damning still. Charles Gildon in *A New Rehearsal* attacks every aspect of the play, including its language, structure, dramaturgy, and morality.³⁴

Performance history

According to *A Comparison Between the Two Stages*, *The Ambitious Step-mother* and another play, *The Ladies Visiting Day* by William Burnaby, ‘divided the Winter [of 1700–1701] between ’em’ at Lincoln’s Inn Fields.³⁵ The historical record, albeit incomplete, suggests otherwise. After its premiere in December 1700 (the date of which is unknown), there is no evidence that Rowe’s play was seen again until a single night’s performance in December 1706. Brief revivals took place in 1715, following Rowe’s appointment as Poet Laureate; 1722, when Barton

Booth, who had played Artaban at the very beginning of his theatrical career in 1700, took the part of Artaxerxes at Drury Lane, where he was also a manager; and 1759, when the play enjoyed a final run of six nights.³⁶

Tamerlane: A Tragedy

Introduction

Taking place immediately before and after the Battle of Ankara between the forces of Tamerlane and Bajazet (20 July 1402), Rowe's second play interweaves three plots, folding the conventional heroic conflict between passion and restraint into contemporary concerns with allegiance. *Tamerlane* is an allegorical play: Tamerlane represents William III; his antagonist, the Turkish emperor Bajazet, reflects (and reflects on) Louis XIV. This parallel dominates the play's stage history and critical reception, but it also obscures the political valences of Rowe's subplots. The first concerns Axalla, an Italian prince, suitor of Bajazet's daughter Selima. Bajazet's violent opposition forces Selima into a crisis of allegiance.³⁷ While such intergenerational tension is conventional, it also reflects the crises of allegiance brought about by the revolution of 1688. The subplot invites us to see Bajazet not just as Louis but also James II, raising in turn the possibility that Selima may sometimes represent Mary, Princess of Orange, who might also be said to have 'chosen' her husband over her father. In the event, the last-minute staying of Bajazet's filicidal hand saves Selima from having to resolve this dilemma.³⁸ Indeed, *Tamerlane* is a curiously suspended play in which a number of things *almost* happen.³⁹

The relationship between Moneses and Arpasia is the affective heart of the play (theirs are the only on-stage deaths).⁴⁰ Betrothed before the play begins, they fall captive to Bajazet, who forcibly marries and then rapes Arpasia.⁴¹ Moneses begs Tamerlane to intervene and is refused: the rule of law and the sanctity of property, represented by the 'Undissolvable' bond of marriage, are inviolable. Anne Greenfield notes the unprecedentedness of Rowe's depiction of marital rape. She argues that although Bajazet's assault would not be seen as a rape in eighteenth-century law, in most respects Rowe treats it as one, illustrating 'Tamerlane's (and William III's) ability to rule according to reason and honor as a neo-stoical figure, rather than according to his passions'.⁴² However, the contemporary legal and moral ambiguity of marital rape once more brings 1688 to mind, a revolution so often represented as paradoxically unprecedented yet legal, an invasion by invitation.⁴³ This forced consummation is a rape and not a rape, just as in much Whig writing the 'glorious' revolution is a conquest and not a conquest. This is not to say that Rowe is bluntly depicting William's arrival *as* marital rape, but that in the passively obedient stoicism displayed in Arpasia and Moneses' martyrdom we can detect a sympathy and respect for principled opponents of the revolution and its legacies.⁴⁴

Critical reception

Few eighteenth-century writers had a kind word to say about *Tamerlane*, at least in print. In *A Comparison Between the Two Stages* (1702), 'Critic' echoes Downes in his assertion that the play owed its success to having 'the best Tragedians in the World to Act it' (p. 190), and questions the plausibility of several plot-lines (pp. 192–4).⁴⁵ According to Gildon, while the 'compliment' to William III 'did the poet's business', it fell far short of that king's virtues.⁴⁶ In 1762 Joseph Warton complains of a 'want of unity in the fable' and bemoans the 'easily drawn; and [. . .] easily acted' character of Bajazet.⁴⁷ Writing as *Tamerlane's* stage life was all but over, Johnson focuses exclusively on the by then outmoded historical parallel.⁴⁸ The Romantic diarist Henry Crabb Robinson saw Edmund Keane's 'wild' Bajazet on 22 November 1815, but thought it 'a very dull play' and 'a compendium of political commonplaces'. 'Tamerlane', he writes, 'is a sort of regal Sir Charles Grandison—a perfect king, very wise and insipid.'⁴⁹

Performance history

Following its 1701 debut, Rowe's *Tamerlane* was performed intermittently until 1710.⁵⁰ There follows a hiatus on the London stage, until the four outings in 1715.⁵¹ There were performances in Dublin on 4 November (William III's birthday) in 1711 and 1712 as part of oppositional pageantry organised by the city corporation; the reading of Samuel Garth's bellicose prologue before the 1712 staging led to rioting.⁵² The second stage of *Tamerlane's* life commenced with the London revival of 4 November 1716: a run of seven consecutive performances, and three more before the year's end. Encouraged by the quashing of the 1715 Jacobite rising, Drury Lane co-opted the Dublin corporation's attachment of the play to William's birthday. Under the Hanoverians, of course, such commemoration was no longer oppositional. From 1716 until 1776, and sporadically thereafter, *Tamerlane* was staged by one or more of the London companies on the anniversaries of William's birthday and/or his landing at Torbay on 5 November 1688.⁵³ In London on 4 November 1734, one could see nothing but *Tamerlane*, which played on four stages.⁵⁴ The ubiquity of *Tamerlane* in the eighteenth century, then, is of a particular kind.⁵⁵ While it is one of the most frequently performed plays of the century, its recurrent presence in early November is quite different from the 'popularity' of a play like *Hamlet*, for there is something automatic or institutionalized about the regularity of its scheduling.⁵⁶ The ossified 'Charles Grandison' and fulminating 'wild beast' that confront Crabb Robinson in 1815 are products of that automation.

Political contexts

For Crabb Robinson as for Johnson, *Tamerlane* had become a two-man play.⁵⁷ Rowe's early twentieth-century editor Sutherland thought two was one too many, responding to the inaction of Rowe's hero: 'Tamerlane himself might be removed

from the play without serious loss.⁵⁸ All three are reading the play through its post-revival performance history. However, representing William III on the stage in 1701 is quite different from doing so in 1716 (never mind 1815). Rowe took risks in portraying a living monarch in the midst of a succession crisis, and on the brink of war. The hesitant ruler reflects a writer constrained by the fact that in late 1701 William was a monarch with the world all before him (the dedication insists that his ‘deciding victory’ was yet to come (p. 159)).

In September 1701, three days before the death of James II and three months before *Tamerlane*’s debut, Louis XIV recognized James Francis Edward Stuart as King of England, Scotland and Ireland. Along with his support of the Duke of Anjou’s claim for the Spanish throne, this contravention of the Treaty of Ryswick accounts for the presentation of Bajazet as a monarch ‘regardless | Of plighted faith’, part of the play’s ethical justification of war (1.1.80).⁵⁹ John Richardson argues that *Tamerlane*’s status as a ‘warrior-despite-himself’ enables Rowe to present war with France as an obligation, not a choice.⁶⁰ Indeed, a sense of inevitability pervades the play, and reveals once more Rowe’s ambiguous handling of politics. Praising *Tamerlane* following his defeat of Bajazet, the Prince of Tanais says that future nations will ‘own, that Conquest is not giv’n by Chance, | But, bound by fatal and resistless Merit, | Waits on his [i.e. *Tamerlane*’s] Arms’ (2.2.8–10). *Tamerlane*’s ‘Merit’ here dispels the atheistic idea that chance determines the outcome of battle.⁶¹ When, later in the play, Axalla responds to Bajazet’s attack on his ‘base’ social status by emphasizing the present-tense value of his ‘friendship’, refusing to ‘borrow Merit from the Dead’, he seems to share this meritocratic standpoint. Yet he precludes that defence with a paralipsis: he ‘*could* vaunt | A Lineage of the greatest’ (3.1.170–82; my emphasis). While Rowe suggests that *Tamerlane* and his adherents, like Milton’s Son of God, hold their positions by merit *more* than birthright, the providential boons of status and rank are never totally effaced.⁶²

Tanais’s praise misfires: *Tamerlane* says he has ‘dress[ed]’ him ‘like an usurper’ in the ‘borrow’d Attributes | Of injur’d Heav’n’ (2.2.10–12):

Can we call Conquest ours?
 Shall Man, this Pigmy, with a Giant’s Pride
 Vaunt of himself, and say, Thus have I done this?
 Oh! vain Pretence to Greatness! Like the Moon,
 We borrow all the Brightness which we boast,
 Dark in our selves, and useless. If that Hand
 That rules the Fate of Battels strike for us,
 Crown us with Fame, and gild our Clay with Honour;
 ’Twere most ungrateful to disown the Benefit,
 And arrogate a Praise which is not ours. (2.2.12–21)

This measured speech recalls familiar critiques of divine-right kingship as theatre, but it implies nevertheless that *Tamerlane*’s position is approved by heaven. The

image of the monarch as the moon, a reflective representative of power, might appeal to contractually-minded Whigs, but the 'Brightness' Tamerlane boasts seems to emanate from above, not below. The 'Hand' of providence underlies both 'Chance' and Tamerlane's apparently 'resistless Merit'. His station as victor is also an obligation, not a choice: a benefit that cannot be disowned. This providential attitude presents the status quo as inevitable without prying too rigorously into how it came about.⁶³ Even the counter-historical possibilities alluded to by Rowe's characters serve to strengthen the sense that Tamerlane's success is inevitable. When Moneses is Tamerlane's prisoner, he declares, 'Were I to chuse from all Mankind a Master, | It should be *Tamerlane*' (1.1.207–8): given the opportunity, that is, he would consent to the condition into which he has been forced. When Bajazet wishes that he had met Tamerlane on the field of battle, he replies: 'Thou had'st then, | As now, been in my Pow'r, and held thy Life | Dependant on my Gift' (2.2.163–5). While Rowe's second play seems to accept the revolution settlement as an inescapable given – as *settled* – its romantic subplots nevertheless register some of its unsettling consequences.

Sources

Rowe's *Tamerlane* is based upon the Turco-Mongol conqueror of Persia, also known as Timur the Lame or Timur Lenk (c. 1330–1405). Students of English literature will know this figure, if they know him at all, from Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* plays. In this, however, they differ from Rowe, who most probably had neither read Marlowe's play nor seen it performed.⁶⁴ As Donald B. Clark showed in 1950, Rowe was chiefly reliant on Richard Knolles's *The Generall History of the Turkes* (1603), a copy of which he owned.⁶⁵ There Rowe found a military leader who was temperate, proto-Christian, diplomatic, and interested in the balancing of power.⁶⁶

The Fair Penitent

Introduction

The Fair Penitent (1703) represents a departure from the heroic world of Nicholas Rowe's two earlier plays. The prologue promises the audience '*a melancholy Tale of private Woes*' (l. 16) far removed from the '*Kings and Empires*' (l. 1) depicted in *The Ambitious Step-mother* and *Tamerlane*. In Rowe's third tragedy, Calista, the only child of a much-loved Genoese citizen, Sciolto, is seduced by the rake Lothario before her marriage to Sciolto's chosen husband, Altamont. After her adultery is discovered by Altamont's friend, Horatio, and then by Altamont himself, Calista is forced to confess and confront her guilt before dying, penitent and reconciled with both her father and her husband. Although Calista's fall from grace towards penitence and, finally, death follows a conventional trajectory, the complexity of her characterization significantly develops Rowe's earlier

experiments with suffering female characters: Cleone and Amestris in *The Ambitious Step-mother*, Selima and Arpasia in *Tamerlane*. As a consequence, *The Fair Penitent* is often regarded as the earliest of Rowe's 'she-tragedies'.⁶⁷

The dramatic structure of Rowe's play, like its plot, reinforces conventional social mores. While the adulterous couple, Calista and Lothario (together or separately), open Acts 2 to 5 of the play with socially defiant gestures, the upright Horatio and his pious wife Lavinia are literally given the final word in each of the play's acts. Lavinia's modest expressions of devotion to her husband ('My little Heart is satisfy'd with you, | You take up all her room' (1.1.398–9)) contrast especially starkly with Calista's proto-feminist call for women to 'claim an equal Empire o'er the World' (3.1.52). In each act, Rowe temporarily unleashes powerful unorthodox forces, only to quell them as the play progresses towards its tragic conclusion.

The social valences of dramatic structure are most keenly apparent towards the close of *The Fair Penitent*. Unlike *The Ambitious Step-mother* or *Tamerlane*, in which the most villainous characters remain troublingly alive – albeit in custody – at the play's end, *The Fair Penitent* ensures that the transgressive couple, Lothario and Calista, are safely dead at the conclusion of the action. Indeed, Lothario's corpse lies on stage through 450 lines of dialogue, including the whole of Act 5. Calista's two unsuccessful suicide attempts not only allow Rowe to electrify his audience (the stage direction '*She offers to kill her self, Sciolto catches hold of her Arm*' (5.1.104 *s.d.*) is surely designed to elicit a scream) but also enable Calista to express, albeit with some ambivalence, socially acceptable attitudes towards her father and husband before her final demise. Death is not enough for an adulteress; penitence is necessary too.

Calista and Lothario's affair threatens not only the cultural institution of marriage, but also homosocial bonds that are celebrated as the highest form of relationship throughout *The Fair Penitent*. Indeed, marriage in this play is primarily a mechanism for negotiating relationships between men. Having adopted Altamont and Lavinia after the death of their father, Sciolto arranges two marriages that reinforce existing bonds of friendship: of Lavinia to her father's friend, Horatio, and of his own daughter, Calista, to Altamont – rather than to Lothario, whose father was Sciolto's enemy. Sciolto and Altamont articulate their own relationship in especially heightened, affective language: in the first scene of the play, Altamont declares that his 'eager Heart springs up, and leaps with Joy' (1.1.22) at the sound of Sciolto's name, while Sciolto recalls Altamont, 'Adorn'd and lovely' at his father's funeral, before, as Sciolto puts it, 'I set thee down and seal'd thee for my own' (1.1.84, 86). Significantly, the conclusion of Act 4 – in which Altamont nearly dies of grief at the wrong he has done Horatio – is echoed at the end of the play's final act, in which Calista nearly dies at her own hand before she can seek forgiveness from Sciolto and Altamont. While Rowe allows Altamont to revive and be reconciled with his friend, however, Calista's reconciliation with her father and husband is followed only by a more calculated and fully reasoned act of self-destruction.

If the careful structure of *The Fair Penitent* underpins this play's conservative ideology, aspects of Calista's character nonetheless trouble its apparent dedication

to social and moral orthodoxies. We see this especially clearly in Act 5. The scene opens on Calista, ‘*on a Couch in Black, her Hair hanging loose and disordered*’, surrounded by dramatic accoutrements suggestive of her own imminent death: a book of moral instruction, a lamp, a *memento mori* in the form of a skull, and Lothario’s body on a bier. Ghoulish music, specially composed for the premiere by John Eccles, beckons Calista down to hell.⁶⁸ Calista, however, punctures the heavy atmosphere of early Gothic drama with a metatheatrical sneer at such ‘Pageantry’ (5.1.32). Scorning the ‘Farce’ that these ‘miserable Relicks play’ (5.1.35) she asserts a sincere, quasi-Protestant form of penitence against superstitious, implicitly Roman Catholic, Genoese convention – and against theatrical conventions that suddenly seem hackneyed, rather than affecting. The complexities of Calista’s character are revealed in her attitude to death, as well as to penitence. She blends Christian penitence with a neo-Stoic view of suicide as preferable to a life of ignominy – an attitude ‘worthy of that Spirit | That dwelt in ancient *Latian* Breasts, when *Rome* | Was Mistress of the World’ (5.1.91–3), according to Sciolto. After she has lost her virtue, it seems, Calista acquires *virtus*, a classical form of masculine, public honour which is proved, rather than undermined, by her bloody end.

Political contexts

Although the prologue to Rowe’s tragedy situates it firmly in a domestic, rather than a political, sphere of action, the play itself invites us to consider the relationship between domestic politics and high politics. At the opening of Act 5, Sciolto reveals that, following Calista and Lothario’s affair, ‘Distraction, and tumultuous Jars | Keep all our frighted Citizens awake’, while ‘fierce Factions . . . drown the Voice of Law in Noise and Anarchy’ (5.1.45–6, 50–1). Taken literally, Sciolto’s words suggest that the family feud between the houses of Altamont and Sciolto on one side, and Lothario on the other, has erupted into full-blown civil war. At another level, however, Calista’s rebellion against patriarchal control is registered metaphorically or analogically by political strife in Genoa. In later Stuart Britain, analogies between family and state were commonplace in political argument, with some theorists asserting a direct correspondence between heads of families and heads of state.⁶⁹ The fact that the action of a play takes place in a bourgeois setting certainly does not make it apolitical.

Calista’s seduction by Lothario adds to the political resonances of this play’s plot. Seduction as a plot motif held particular appeal for writers who were uncomfortable with the constitutional implications of William III’s accession to the throne in 1688, but who nonetheless sought to reconcile themselves to, rather than to resist, the new regime. These writers articulate what Toni Bowers terms ‘collusive resistance’ – a paradox that allows fictional characters to be represented as both guilty of a misdemeanour and yet virtuous at the same time.⁷⁰ If the *virtus* that Sciolto ascribes to Calista after she has lost her virtue is regarded as a form of collusive resistance, Rowe’s play begins to resemble many of the seduction narratives published by Tory writers in the early years of the eighteenth century.

That *The Fair Penitent* should resemble Tory fiction is perhaps surprising given that Rowe is usually depicted as a fervent Whig.⁷¹ Rowe's political reputation is in large part a retrospective construction, however, and the politics of Rowe's early plays are rather more ambivalent than post-1715 depictions of this playwright might suggest.⁷² In *The Fair Penitent*, Rowe's characterization of Sciolto in particular reveals the complexity of his engagement with contemporary political discourses.

Sciolto is a patriarch: a father figure who exacts the kind of passive obedience from his daughter that high Tory political theorists believed was due to their own monarch.⁷³ By acquiring increasing numbers of 'children' through marital alliances (Altamont, Lavinia and Horatio), he expands his patriarchal dominion, his potency all the more pronounced in the absence of a wife. The fact that Calista's disobedience causes civic as well as domestic collapse perhaps suggests the desirability of obedience to just such a patriarch. Indeed, republican Genoa struggles in the absence of a patriarch at its head: its 'Senate, weak, divided and irresolute, | Want Pow'r to succour the afflicted State' (5.1.47–8). Tragedy arises out of a combination of the disobedience of natural subordinates, and the structural weakness of a commonwealth – ideas likely to appeal to Tory sympathizers during the early years of the eighteenth century.⁷⁴

If Sciolto's patriarchal right is affirmed, however, his methods of maintaining personal power do not go entirely unchallenged. Again, Rowe's careful use of structure is significant. Several of Sciolto's effusive entrances jar against the increasingly dark tone of the play: his declaration, 'Let Mirth go on, let Pleasure know no pause' (2.1.120), immediately after a particularly tense exchange between Altamont and Calista, must raise a wry smile, if not a laugh, from the audience. Sciolto's unfailing devotion to his male friends and tyrannical enforcement of his own choice of marriage partner upon his daughter may not be the single cause of the play's tragic events, but it is hard to argue that they are not contributory factors. By the same token, Calista's assertion that she rebelled 'because I lov'd, and was a Woman' (5.1.73) seems an over-simplistic assumption of total personal responsibility, even in the context of the passion-filled final act. Rowe may not overtly promote or even condone resistance to tyranny in the manner of a thoroughgoing Whig, but he explores some of the potentially tragic implications of non-resistance. The fact that *The Fair Penitent* refuses to submit to a simplistic ideological interpretation testifies to Rowe's thoughtful dramatic engagement with contemporary political discourses.

Sources

The action of *The Fair Penitent* draws on two dramatic sources: primarily *The Fatal Dowry* (c. 1619, published 1632) by Philip Massinger and Nathan Field, but also *The Orphan* (1680) by Thomas Otway.

In *The Fatal Dowry*, Charalois (Rowe's Altamont) offers himself as a prisoner in exchange for the dead body of his father, which has been impounded and denied burial as a consequence of his father's debts. Impressed by Charalois's filial piety,

Rochfort (Sciolto) pays off the debts, releases Charalois from prison, and marries him to his daughter, Beaumelle (Calista). Following this marriage, Beaumelle is seduced by her former suitor, Novall (Lothario), and the adultery discovered by Charalois's friend Romont (Horatio). Rochfort condemns his daughter, in spite of her penitence, to execution at her husband's hand, but as soon as Charalois carries out the sentence Rochfort is overcome with grief and regret. Novall's companion, Pontalier (Rossano), stabs Charalois and is killed in return by Romont. Eugene Waith has demonstrated that this plot itself derives from a Senecan *controversia*, or legal conundrum.⁷⁵

Rowe not only changes the ending of the play so that Calista commits suicide, Sciolto dies, and Altamont survives, but he also makes dramaturgical changes to Massinger and Field's plot. Rowe's characters recount in dialogue two key events that have already taken place by the time the action of the play begins: Altamont's self-sacrifice for the sake of his father's corpse, and Sciolto's redemption of him (narrated by Altamont and Horatio, 1.1.40–60); and the seduction of Calista by Lothario (narrated by Lothario, 1.1.143–66). In doing so, Rowe's play adheres more closely to classical unities of time and place, and it also gives dramatic priority to Calista's emotional relationships with her father, husband, and her own honour and conscience, even as it draws out her death.

Calista's suffering connects her to her affective predecessor, Monimia, protagonist of Thomas Otway's play *The Orphan*.⁷⁶ Monimia marries her lover, Castalio, in secret. Polidor, Castalio's twin, who is unaware that the secret marriage has taken place, plays a bed-trick on Monimia on her wedding night and substitutes himself for her husband. When Monimia and Polidor realize what has happened, they indulge in extravagant expressions of misery and penitence before committing suicide. Both Calista and Monimia, then, engage in self-destructive acts of penitence following sexual infidelity. Unlike Monimia, however, Calista is neither an innocent, unwitting dupe, nor the passive subject of an audience's pity.⁷⁷ Calista's 'collusive resistance', expressed through the language of civic rather than sexual virtue, challenges the image of female victimhood presented by Otway.

Lothario's character has a literary predecessor other than the stock character of the dramatic rake more usually found in comedy than tragedy before 1700. The story of 'The Curious Impertinent' in Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra's *Don Quixote* (1605) presents a character called Lothario who seduces Camilla, the wife of his friend Anselm, after Anselm asks him to test Camilla's virtue.⁷⁸ Although seduction is central to both stories, the reluctance of Cervantes's Lothario to carry out his friend's request, coupled with Anselm's unwarranted suspicion of his wife at the opening of this story, perhaps colours the gender politics of Rowe's drama.

Performance history

The Fair Penitent was first performed in March 1703 and received at least two more performances in May and June of the same year.⁷⁹ There is no evidence that it was performed again until 1715, when it was revived immediately following Rowe's appointment as Poet Laureate. It remained popular throughout the rest of

the eighteenth century, its success perhaps reinforced by the popularity of Rowe's other major 'she-tragedy', *Jane Shore*. In December 1741 David Garrick played Lothario for the first time – a role that he held for nearly twenty years. During a seventeen-night run in the 1782–3 season, Sarah Siddons acted the part of Calista to great acclaim.⁸⁰ Lothario and Calista were occasionally played as 'travesty' parts, by actors of the opposite sex to their characters.⁸¹ *The Fair Penitent* became a significant play on the eighteenth-century Dublin stage, and was performed throughout the developing British Empire, in Jamaica, Calcutta, and New South Wales.⁸²

Critical reception

Eighteenth-century critical opinion on *The Fair Penitent* was divided. An early poetic response to the play (dressed up as a prologue notionally sent to Nicholas Rowe, but rejected) condemns the morality and style of a play that 'swells the *humble Whore* with Buskind rants'.⁸³ In 1708, John Downes praised the play but acknowledged its lack of success in the playhouse: 'a very good Play for three Acts; but failing in the two last, [it] answer'd not [the company's] Expectation'.⁸⁴ Samuel Johnson offers it the warmest praise, describing the play as 'one of the most pleasing tragedies on the stage . . . for there is scarcely any work of any poet at once so interesting by the fable, and so delightful by the language'.⁸⁵

Several commentators drew comparisons between *The Fair Penitent* and *The Fatal Dowry*, usually to Rowe's detriment. Charles Gildon, observing Rowe's unacknowledged debts to Massinger, derides his rival playwright as 'a Sponge dip'd in Ink'.⁸⁶ Later in the century Richard Cumberland promoted the morality of Massinger and Field's play over that of its successor, highlighting the dangerously pleasing nature of Rowe's language.⁸⁷ His warnings against Rowe's *The Fair Penitent* are the more important, he suggests, because 'There is no drama more frequently exhibited, or more generally read'.⁸⁸

The fact that *The Fair Penitent* was so widely known meant that it became a point of literary and cultural reference over the course of the eighteenth century. Traces of Calista and Lothario appear in Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* (1748) and Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766),⁸⁹ as well as in less celebrated publications. *An Epistle from Calista to Altamont* (1729) borrows Rowe's characters to reflect in poetic form on the trial of Richard Lyddel for criminal conversation with Lady Abergavenny. *The Forsaken Fair: An Epistle from Calista in her Late Illness at Bath to Lothario on his Approaching Nuptials* (1736) similarly uses Rowe's characters to express a woman's penitence following an affair.⁹⁰ The name 'Lothario', of course, has passed into common parlance as a byword for a rake.

Notes

- 1 For a summary of the Collier controversy, see Michael Cordner, 'Playwright versus Priest: Profanity and the Wit of Restoration Comedy', in *The Cambridge Companion to English Restoration Theatre*, ed. Deborah Payne Fisk (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 209–25. In an important essay, Robert D. Hume exercises

- scepticism towards the impact that Collier made upon the early eighteenth-century stage ('Jeremy Collier and the Future of the London Theater in 1698', *Studies in Philology* 96:4 (1999), pp. 480–511). On the broader 'reformation of manners' movement, see Tony Claydon, *William III and the Godly Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 111–21.
- 2 Judith Milhous, *Thomas Betterton and the Management of Lincoln's Inn Fields, 1695–1708* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1979), pp. 125–9. On such 'sow'r Reformers' and the 'Evidence' they gather, see *Tamerlane*, 'Epilogue', ll. 20–2, below, p. 231.
 - 3 Gilli Bush-Bailey, *Treading the Bawds: Actresses and Playwrights on the Late-Stuart Stage* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 186.
 - 4 On the extreme financial and legal pressures experienced by Lincoln's Inn Fields at the turn of the century, see Milhous, *Thomas Betterton*, pp. 113–88.
 - 5 Milhous, *Thomas Betterton*, p. 119.
 - 6 See *The Ambitious Step-mother*, 'Prologue' ll. 18–24, 'Epilogue' ll. 26–32, and General Introduction, pp. 10–11, above.
 - 7 For a synthetic analysis of the concept of politeness, see Lawrence Klein, 'Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century', *The Historical Journal* 45:4 (2002), pp. 869–98.
 - 8 Klein, 'Politeness', p. 874; Jonathan Swift, *Tatler* 230, 28 September 1710, in *The Tatler*, ed. Donald F. Bond, three vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), vol. 3, p. 195, quoted in Klein, 'Politeness', p. 874.
 - 9 Rowe mentions the 'good nature' of his audience, the Town more generally, and his dedicatee four times in the Dedication to *The Ambitious Step-mother*; see below, pp. 64–5. On the importance of 'good nature' in this period, see John K. Sheriff, *The Good-Natured Man: The Evolution of a Moral Ideal, 1660–1800* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1982).
 - 10 Milhous, *Thomas Betterton*, p. 129.
 - 11 On the conservative politics and spectacular aesthetics of the heroic mode, see Elaine McGirr, *Heroic Mode and Political Crisis, 1660–1745* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 2009); and Bridget Orr, *Empire on the English Stage, 1660–1714* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 28–60.
 - 12 On the ways in which earlier dramatists engaged with political ideas, see Susan Staves, *Players' Scepters: Fictions of Authority in the Restoration* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1979); and Susan Owen, *Restoration Theatre and Crisis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).
 - 13 The fact that Memnon is a soldier connects him especially closely with Williamite militarism. On soldiers, politics and the theatre, see Loftis, *Politics of Drama in Augustan England*, p. 27.
 - 14 According to Locke, the 'beginning of Political Societies' occurs with 'that Consent which makes any one a Member of any Commonwealth'; John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960; rev. edn 1988), vol. 2, pp. 122, 349.
 - 15 John Locke regarded self-preservation as fundamental to natural law: 'Every one . . . is bound to preserve himself, and not to quit his Station wilfully' (*Two Treatises*, 2.6, p. 289).
 - 16 On partisan conflict during the early years of the eighteenth century, see Tim Harris, *Politics Under the Later Stuarts: Party Conflict in a Divided Society 1660–1715* (London and New York: Longman, 1993), pp. 147–207; and Mark Knights, *Representation and Misrepresentation in Later Stuart Britain: Partisanship and Political Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 22–30.
 - 17 For more on the influence of *The Orphan* upon Rowe's drama, see Laura Brown, *English Dramatic Form, 1660–1760: An Essay in Generic History* (New Haven and

- London: Yale University Press, 1981), pp. 148–50; and Vaska Tumir, ‘She-Tragedy and Its Men: Conflict and Form in *The Orphan* and *The Fair Penitent*’, *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 30:3 (1990), pp. 411–28.
- 18 See below, p. 65. Rowe would once again experiment with an entirely virtuous female victim in his final play, *The Tragedy of the Lady Jane Gray* (1715).
 - 19 Cleone was first played by Elizabeth Bowman (see below, p. 67). On breeches parts, see John O’Brien, ‘Drama: Gender, Genre, Theater’, in *A Concise Companion to the Restoration and Eighteenth Century*, ed. Cynthia Wall (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), ch. 6, pp. 194–5; and Felicity Nussbaum, *Rival Queens: Actresses, Performance, and the Eighteenth-Century British Theatre* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), pp. 76, 195–213.
 - 20 On suffering women in English tragedy, see Laura Brown, ‘The Defenseless Woman and the Development of English Tragedy’, *Studies in English Literature* 22 (1982), pp. 429–43; and Jean I. Marsden, *Fatal Desire: Women, Sexuality, and the English Stage, 1660–1720* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2006).
 - 21 As Bridget Orr points out, many contemporary ‘plays with exotic settings . . . provided a useful context for the consideration of such urgent topics as usurpation, revolution, succession, tyranny and the ruler’s enthrallment by luxury’ (Orr, *Empire on the English Stage*, p. 11). Annibel Jenkins notes that ‘the topic of the problems of succession in *The Ambitious Step-mother* was of special interest to Rowe’s audience in December, 1700’ (Jenkins, *Nicholas Rowe*, p. 36), but she does not explore the political connotations of Rowe’s play in any degree of detail.
 - 22 On the warming-pan scandal, see Rachel Weil, *Political Passions: Gender, the Family and Political Argument in England, 1680–1714* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 86–104.
 - 23 Marilyn Francus reads Artaban as William III in ‘Rowe’s *The Ambitious Step-mother*: Motherhood and the Politics of the Blended Family’, in Laura Engel and Elaine M. McGirr (eds), *Stage Mothers: Women, Work and the Theater, 1660–1830* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2014), pp. 121–36.
 - 24 This is perhaps surprising given that Rowe, during his early career, is usually considered to be a ‘forthright Whig’ (Loftis, *Politics of Drama in Augustan England*, p. 36). As Paulina Kewes has shown, however, Rowe’s plays could be more politically ambivalent than this rather crude party label might imply (see Kewes, “‘The State Is Out of Tune’”, pp. 301–21). Although Kewes asserts that ‘in his earlier plays . . . Rowe had made his Whig convictions abundantly clear’ (p. 287), the politics of *The Ambitious Step-mother* are less clearly defined than this estimation would suggest.
 - 25 On Tory responses to the revolution, see Tony Claydon, *William III and the Godly Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 148–53; and Toni Bowers, *Force or Fraud: British Seduction Stories and the Problem of Resistance, 1660–1760* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 139–58.
 - 26 On abdication theories of the revolution, see J. P. Kenyon, *Revolution Principles: The Politics of Party 1689–1720* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 38–43.
 - 27 Bowers, *Force or Fraud*, pp. 139–294.
 - 28 See below, p. 65.
 - 29 Others read the ending of the play as more definitive. Bridget Orr, for instance, suggests that Artemisa’s ‘banishment to her proper realm opens up the possibility of a new scene of Persian greatness’ (Orr, *Empire*, p. 128).
 - 30 See below, p. 64.
 - 31 Charles Gildon, *A New Rehearsal; or, Bays the Younger* (London: [s.n.], 1714), pp. 23–30. The biblical source is 1 Kings 1.5–53, which Gildon transcribes in its entirety. Artaban had been identified with Solomon as early as 1703 in Anon., *A Prologue, Sent to Mr. Row, To his New Play, Call’d, The Fair Penitent. Design’d to be Spoken by Mr. Betterton; but refus’d* (London, 1703), p. 3.

- 32 Johnson, *Lives of the Poets*, vol. 2, p. 199; Downes, *Roscius Anglicanus*, p. 46.
- 33 Anon., *A Comparison Between the Two Stages*, p. 181. Such half-hearted praise nonetheless shows up well against the vicious attacks that this pamphlet mounts on most other recent dramatic productions. 'Here's just a Score [of new plays]', it opines 'of which Number, *Eighteen* have had the Honour to be Damn'd' (p. 28).
- 34 Gildon, *New Rehearsal*, pp. 17–36.
- 35 Anon., *A Comparison Between the Two Stages*, p. 180.
- 36 Perhaps the premiere of Robert Dodsley's play *Cleone* in December 1758 reminded the company at Covent Garden of the character of this name in Rowe's play.
- 37 Axalla is also tested when Bajazet offers Selima's hand in return for Tamerlane's head (3.1.197–237).
- 38 Samia Al-Shayban argues for a connection between James II and Bajazet. See 'In Search of James II: Bajazet's Figurative Presence in Nicholas Rowe's *Tamerlane*', *Disarat* 36 (2009), pp. 213–22.
- 39 The filicide in question almost happens no fewer than three times in the final scene (four, if we count filicide by proxy). See also the foiled assassination attempt of 3.2.
- 40 This scene is the subject for the engraving included in 1714 and 1717 (see Fig. 3). The subplot has no analogue in Rowe's known sources.
- 41 On the question of whether or not Arpasia and Moneses were in fact married, see *Tamerlane*, p. 236, n. 54.
- 42 Anne Greenfield, 'The Question of Marital Rape in Nicholas Rowe's *Tamerlane*', *Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Theatre Research* 26 (2011), pp. 57–72 (p. 66).
- 43 On the relation of rape narratives to the revolution, see above p. 39 and n. 27. See also the politics of seduction in *The Fair Penitent*, above (p. 46).
- 44 J. Douglas Canfield acknowledges the 'poignancy' of this subplot but does not pursue its political significances (*Nicholas Rowe and Christian Tragedy* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1977), p. 53).
- 45 Downes, *Roscius Anglicanus*, p. 45.
- 46 Gildon, *New Rehearsal*, p. 52.
- 47 Joseph Warton, *Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope* (London: for R. and J. Dodsley, 1762), p. 270.
- 48 Johnson, *Lives of the Poets*, pp. 199–200.
- 49 We hear that Keane 'rushed on the stage at his first appearance as a wild beast may be supposed to enter a new den to which his keepers have transferred him' (Henry Crabb Robinson, *The Diary, reminiscences, and correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson*, ed. Thomas Sadler, three vols (London: Macmillan, 1869), vol. 1, pp. 504–5). Keane's revival is probably in response to the victory at Waterloo.
- 50 Judith Milhous and Robert Hume list *Tamerlane* as debuting in December 1701, but records are scant for this year and the dating is conjecturally based on the publication of the play on 17 January 1702. See 'Season of 1701–1702' in *The London Stage 1660–1800 Part 2: 1700–1729: A New Version*, www.personal.psu.edu/faculty/h/b/hb1/London%20Stage%202001/lond1701.pdf, p. 48. The advertisement is in the *Post Boy* of 17–20 January 1702. For subsequent performances, see Appendix C.
- 51 Three performances at Lincoln's Inn Fields in May ride the coat-tails of the long April run of *Lady Jane Gray* at Drury Lane. (See Vol. 3, Appendix C.)
- 52 See Helen M. Burke, *Riotous Performances: The Struggle for Hegemony in the Irish Theater, 1712–1784* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2003), pp. 19–52. For the prologue and discussion, see Appendix B.
- 53 See Appendix C. On Thomas Godfrey's use of *Tamerlane* in his *Prince of Parthia* (the first play to be acted on the professional stage in America) see Thomas Clark Pollock, 'Rowe's *Tamerlane* and The Prince of Parthia', *American Literature* 6 (1934), pp. 158–62; and Frank Shuffelton, 'The Voice of History: Thomas Godfrey's "Prince of Parthia" and Revolutionary America', *Early American Literature* 13 (1978), pp. 12–23.

- 54 See advertisements in *The London Daily Post and General Advertiser*, 4 November 1734. The performance advertised at Greenwich, entitled *The Fall of Bajazet*, may not have been Rowe's play, or may have been some abridged version of it. It is possibly related to *Tamerlane the Great: With the Fall of Bajazet*, staged at the booth erected by Cibber, Griffin, Bullock and Hallam in Bartholomew Fair in August 1733, illustrated on the far left of Hogarth's print *Southwark Fair*. Though the title suggests a connection to Charles Saunders's earlier play *Tamerlane the Great* (London: for Richard Bentley and M. Magnes, 1681), the parts listed in the advertisement correspond to Rowe's (see *London Stage*, vol. 3, pp. xlii, 312). There are four further recorded performances of *Tamerlane the Great*, on 22 August 1747 (Bartholomew Fair), 10 May 1750 (New Wells, Shepherd's Market), 6 March 1786 and 22 December 1788 (both at the Theatre Royal, Haymarket). See Appendix C.
- 55 There are 201 performances celebrating Williamite anniversaries between 1716 and 1800 (counting performances on 4, 5, and 6 November, where a performance on the 6th compensates for the 4th or 5th falling on a Sunday). This represents 66 per cent of all performances in that period. There are fewer performances on other dates as the century progresses. See Appendix C.
- 56 We might adopt the phrasing of Alan B. Farmer and Zachary Lesser and say that *Tamerlane* has a different 'structure of popularity' to *Hamlet* (see 'Structures of Popularity in the Early Modern Book Trade', *SQ* 56 (2005), pp. 206–13; and 'What Is Print Popularity? A Map of the Elizabethan Book Trade', in *The Elizabethan Top Ten*, ed. Andy Kesson and Emma Smith (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 19–54). On frequently performed plays see George Winchester Stone, Jr., 'The Making of the Repertory', in *The London Theatre World, 1660–1800*, ed. Robert D. Hume (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980), pp. 181–209.
- 57 There is evidence that the subplots were given increasingly less space on the stage as the century progressed. The advertisement for the 1733 Bartholomew Fair production does not list parts for Moneses and Arpasia (*London Stage*, vol. 3, p. 312). *Tamerlane a Tragedy* [. . .] *Marked with Variations in the Managers Book, at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane* (London: for T Lowndes et al, 1776) details the cuts made for the Drury Lane production of 4 November 1776. Exposition and prolepsis are generally removed – presumably because audiences knew the play rather too well – but the parts in the subplots are the most heavily curtailed.
- 58 Nicholas Rowe, *Three Plays*, ed. J. R. Sutherland (London: The Scholartiss Press, 1929), p. 25. Crabb Robinson dismisses *Tamerlane* as Bajazet's 'foil'. Sutherland echoes Gildon: 'the Part of *Tamerlane* may be taken out, and the Play remain as good as with it' (pp. 52–3). On the other hand, Landon C. Burns states that 'it is through [*Tamerlane*] that the play gains what unity it has' (*Pity and Tears: The Tragedies of Nicholas Rowe* (Salzburg: Institut für Englische Sprache und Literatur, Universität Salzburg, 1974), p. 61).
- 59 William had formed the Grand Alliance and gone to war in Europe in the 1690s as a way of limiting the power of the French. In October 1700, the childless Habsburg monarch Carlos II of Spain died, bequeathing the Spanish throne in his will to Philip of Anjou, the grandson of Louis XIV. Louis's acceptance of this will conjured the possibility of a future French monarch ruling France, Spain and all their territories. Supporting Anjou was seen as a contravention of the Partition Treaty. See *Tamerlane*, p. 159; p. 232, n. 7 and p. 233, n. 8.
- 60 John Richardson, 'Nicholas Rowe's *Tamerlane* and the Martial Ideal', *MLQ* 69 (2008), pp. 269–89 (p. 271).
- 61 In contrast, the impious Bajazet insists that *Tamerlane*'s power over him has been 'giv'n' by 'the chance of War' (2.2.57).
- 62 John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Alistair Fowler (Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd, 2007), III.309.

- 63 Canfield's *Nicholas Rowe and Christian Tragedy* explores the relation of providence and poetical justice (see chapter 1, and *passim*).
- 64 *The London Stage* records no performances, and Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* plays were last published in 1605 and 1606.
- 65 Donald B. Clark, 'The Source and Characterization of Nicholas Rowe's *Tamerlane*', *Modern Language Notes* 65 (1950), pp. 145–52. 'Knolles's Hist. of the Turks' is item 73 in the posthumous catalogue of Rowe's library (*A Catalogue of the Library of Nicholas Rowe, Esq.* ([London]: [s.n.], 1719); Clark, p. 147). *Tamerlane* appears in the chapter on Bajazet in Richard Knolles, *The Generall Historie of the Turkes* (London, 1603), pp. 203–28. See also Canfield, *Nicholas Rowe and Christian Tragedy*, p. 46 ff., where he also engages with the Miltonic allusions detailed in George W. Whiting, 'Rowe's Debt to Paradise Lost', *Modern Philology* 32 (1935), pp. 271–9.
- 66 Reviewing a number of seventeenth-century works featuring Timur, Richardson suggests that Rowe's *Tamerlane* outdoes all but one 'in the degree and pacificity of his virtue' ('*Tamerlane* and the Martial Ideal', p. 276). He also notes an abridgement of Knolles that appeared in 1701 (p. 274).
- 67 Rowe coined the generic label 'she-tragedy' in the epilogue to *Jane Shore* (1714); see Vol. 3, p. 94. For an analysis of this genre, see Marsden, *Fatal Desire*.
- 68 See Appendix D.
- 69 On the relationship between high politics and the family, see Weil, *Political Passions*.
- 70 Bowers, *Force or Fraud*, p. 4 *et passim*.
- 71 John Loftis, among others, describes Rowe as a 'forthright Whig' (Loftis, *Politics of Drama in Augustan England*, p. 36). Tumor, 'She-Tragedy and Its Men', argues that *The Fair Penitent* represents a Whig response to a Tory dramatic predecessor.
- 72 See above, p. 36.
- 73 The primary articulation of this position during the later Stuart period is Sir Robert Filmer, *Patriarcha: or, the Natural Power of Kings* (London, 1680).
- 74 On expressions of Tory ideology in popular writing, see Mark Knights, 'The Tory Interpretation of History in the *Rage of Parties*', in *The Uses of History in Early Modern England*, ed. Paulina Kewes (San Marino: Huntington Library, 2006), pp. 347–66; and Tim Harris, *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles II: Propaganda and Politics from the Reign of Charles II until the Exclusion Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 130–55.
- 75 Eugene Waith, 'Controversia in the English Drama: Medwall and Massinger', *PMLA* 68:1 (1953), pp. 286–303.
- 76 On the relationship between *The Fair Penitent* and *The Orphan*, see Tumor, 'She-Tragedy and Its Men'; and Brown, *English Dramatic Form*, pp. 149–50.
- 77 C.f. Laura Brown 'The Defenseless Woman', and Marsden, *Fatal Desire*, pp. 132–67, who argue that Calista does occupy a passive position.
- 78 Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, *The History of the Most Renowned Don Quixote of Mancha and his Trusty Squire Sancho Pancho*, trans. John Phillips (London: J. Newton, 1687), pp. 179–97.
- 79 *The Post Boy* for 4 and 9 March 1703 advertised a prologue that was notionally refused by Nicholas Rowe. Jacob Tonson advertised the play for sale in *The Post Boy* for 13 March 'As it is Acted in the New Theatre in Little Lincolns-Inn-Fields'. The first recorded performance in *The London Stage* is in May 1703 (see Appendix C, below).
- 80 See *The Theatrical Portrait, A Poem, on the Celebrated Mrs. Siddons, In the Characters of Calista, Jane Shore, Belvidera and Isabella* (1783).
- 81 On Peg Woffington's performance as Lothario, see Nussbaum, *Rival Queens*, pp. 222–5. Lothario was also played by Charlotte Charke, while in 1734 Charlotte Charke played Lothario to a 'Mr Roberts' as Calista. See Appendix C.

- 82 Susan C. Harris, 'Outside the Box: The Female Spectator, *The Fair Penitent*, and the Kelly Riots of 1747', *Theatre Journal* 57:1 (2005), pp. 33–55; Kathleen Wilson, 'Rowe's "Fair Penitent" as Global History: Or, A Diversionary Voyage to New South Wales', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 41:2 (2008), pp. 231–51.
- 83 Anon., *A Prologue, Sent to Mr. Row, To his New Play, Call'd, The Fair Penitent. Design'd to be Spoken by Mr. Betterton; but refus'd* (1703), p. 2. ESTC suggests a date of 1706, but *A Prologue* was advertised in *The Post Boy* for 4 March 1703.
- 84 Downes, *Roscus Anglicanus*, p. 46.
- 85 Johnson, *Lives of the Poets*, vol. 2, p. 200.
- 86 Gildon, *New Rehearsal*, p. 63.
- 87 Richard Cumberland, *The Observer: Being a Collection of Moral, Literary and Familiar Essays*, five vols (London: C. Dilly, 1786), no. 89, vol. 3, p. 279.
- 88 Cumberland, *Observer*, no. 88, vol. 3, p. 263.
- 89 Robert L. Mack, 'Extended Intertextual Reference to Nicholas Rowe's *The Fair Penitent* in Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield*', *Notes & Queries* 54:4 (2007), pp. 467–9; Johnson, *Lives of the Poets*, vol. 2, p. 200.
- 90 Charles Beckingham, *An Epistle from Calista to Altamont* (1729); *The Forsaken Fair: An Epistle from Calista in her Late Illness at Bath to Lothario on his Approaching Nuptials* (1736).

PUBLICATION HISTORY AND TEXTUAL NOTE TO *THE AMBITIOUS STEP-MOTHER*, *TAMERLANE*, AND *THE FAIR PENITENT*

The Ambitious Step-mother

Publication history

In the Dedication to this play Rowe claims that, in performance, 600 lines of *The Ambitious Step-mother* had to be cut ‘by reason of the extreme Length’.¹ These lines were apparently restored to the first, quarto edition of the play (ESTC T55547), which was printed for Peter Buck and published on 28 January 1701. The second edition, a quarto printed for Richard Wellington (ESTC T66014 and N2690) in 1702, claims, on its title page, to be published ‘with the Addition of a New SCENE’.² In fact, there are no substantial additions to the first edition in the second edition of the play. Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume speculate that the new scene to which the second edition refers ‘was either available in time for the first edition or accidentally omitted from the second’.³ Since there are no extensive variants in the third edition (T21812), a duodecimo (‘Neat Pocket Volume’)⁴ published for Jacob Tonson in 1714, it seems most likely that the ‘new scene’ had already been incorporated by the time the first edition was published. It is possible that this scene was made up of the 600 lines cut from performance to which Rowe refers in the ‘Dedication’.

Textual note

The copy text for this edition is the third edition (T21812), the last lifetime edition, and is based on the copy held at the Bodleian Library, Oxford (shelfmark Vet. A4 f.135(1)).⁵ This edition corrects many errors in the two earlier editions of the play. Many individual words and phrases are revised, though it is impossible to tell whether or not these revisions are Rowe’s.⁶

Tamerlane

Publication history

Tamerlane first appeared in quarto on 17 January 1702, marking the start of Rowe’s relationship with the Tonson firm, who published all four lifetime editions.⁷ The

second edition of 1703 was printed in quarto by William Davis. There are two variant title pages: one declaring the play to be printed for Tonson, and one printed for Tonson 'And Sold by' Davis at his premises in Cornhill. This may have helped Tonson reach customers in the city.⁸ The 1714 duodecimo, which included du Guernier's engraving of the strangling of Moneses, came in response to the publication by Bernard Lintot of *Jane Shore*, Rowe's first play in seven years. *Jane Shore* has been supposed to mark Tonson's final 'loss of Rowe', as Pope put it in 'A Farewell to London'.⁹ Yet Tonson continued to sell Rowe's earlier tragedies, including *Tamerlane*. Indeed, the formats in which both he and Lintot produced and marketed these after 1714 suggest collaboration, or at least a pragmatic solution to the problem of the joint ownership of Rowe's dramatic oeuvre. Tonson advertises 'Neat and correct' 'Pocket Volumes' of both *Tamerlane* and *The Fair Penitent* in *The Daily Courant* on 15 February, directly beneath Lintot's advertisement for *Jane Shore*. Then, in August, Lintot published a second edition of *Jane Shore* in duodecimo, enabling the sale of complete sets comprising Tonson and Lintot texts, with a new dedication of all Rowe's tragedies to Addison's stepson, the Earl of Warwick (for which, see Appendix A).¹⁰ The second edition of *Jane Grey* completed this duodecimo set, which Lintot sold bound in two volumes, gilt, for 10 shillings (see advertisement in *The Post Man and the Historical Account*, 30 April 1717).¹¹ Nichols records an agreement made between Tonson and Lintot on 16 February 1718 'to be equally concerned in all the plays they should buy, Eighteen Months following the above date'.¹² The agreement does not relate to Rowe, but may indicate that the experience of co-producing (or at least co-marketing) his tragedies after 1714 was a positive one.

Textual note

In line with this edition's policy, the copy text is the fourth and last lifetime edition.¹³ It is dated 1717, but was published in duodecimo on 20 November 1716, following on the heels of the revival, and containing the second prologue Rowe wrote for that occasion.¹⁴ It is printed for Tonson, most probably by John Watts, and sold by Jonas Browne from his shop 'without Temple Bar'.¹⁵ The precise relationship between Tonson and Browne is unclear, but seems to date from 1714.¹⁶ In that year Browne sells Tonson editions of Blackmore's *Prince Arthur*, Joseph Trapp's *Abra-mule: Or, Love and Empire*, and (amongst many other booksellers) the 1714 edition of Rowe's Shakespeare. In 1716 and 1717, he sells Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Prophetess: or, the History of Dioclesian*, also printed for Tonson, and also listed in the 20 November 1716 advertisement for *Tamerlane*. Browne is also entangled in the sharing of Rowe between Tonson and Lintot. In an advertisement in the *Daily Courant* of 6 May 1715, Lintot chastised Browne and his partners William Mears and Thomas Woodward for passing off an old play by Banks as Rowe's *Jane Gray*. In the advertisement for that spurious text, Browne, Mears and Woodward also claimed to be selling all Rowe's plays, which should then have included Lintot's *Jane Shore* as well as Tonson's texts (i.e. Browne

et al. here claim to be selling the duodecimo sets discussed above).¹⁷ Browne lists all Rowe's tragedies by title again a month later.¹⁸ While it is possible that 'The Tragedy of the Lady Jane Grey' advertised there was still the Banks play, perhaps Lintot had relented and was then, like Tonson, using Browne as a seller: in the November 1716 advertisement for *Tamerlane*, Browne once more offers 'all' Rowe's drama.

Tamerlane is a relatively stable text. A few typographical errors and metrical irregularities were caught in the second edition of 1703 (though some were introduced – see 5.1.111, where in 1703 Arpasia exclaims, 'By all my hops of happiness!'). The three instances of turned type, two literal errors, and some badly inked type in the copies of 1717 examined may indicate a hasty production.¹⁹ There is nothing that can decisively point to Rowe's hand in the few changes made to 1717, but this edition did represent the last opportunity for the playwright to revise the tragedy he 'valued most'.²⁰

The Fair Penitent

Publication history

All lifetime editions of *The Fair Penitent* were printed for Jacob Tonson, whose working relationship with Nicholas Rowe had begun with the publication of *Tamerlane* in 1702. The first, quarto edition (ESTC T35170) was advertised for sale in *The Post Boy* for 13 March 1703. The second 'neat Pocket Edition', a duodecimo 'printed with an Elzevir Letter', was published on 30 January 1714, according to the issue of *The Englishman* for that day. ESTC N62136 is designated 'The SECOND EDITION' on the title page. ESTC T138553 lacks this designation but reveals instances of broken type and typographical errors identical with N62136. Variants from the 1703 quarto and 1718 duodecimo are the same in both T138553 and N62136. These texts likely represent a single edition reissued with a variant title page. The publication of the second edition, which includes du Guernier's engraved frontispiece, coincided with the first performances of *Jane Shore* and was presumably designed to capitalize on renewed interest in Rowe, and especially Rowe's 'she-tragedies'. A third edition, also in duodecimo, was published in 1714. This edition is not identified in ESTC but copies exist in the Folger Shakespeare Library and Columbia University Library.²¹ A fourth edition, called 'The THIRD EDITION' on its title page (ESTC T35176), was published in duodecimo in 1718. No advertisement survives to provide a date of publication.

Textual note

The copy text for this edition is the 1718 edition (ESTC T35176), and is based on the copy held in the library of Lincoln College, Oxford, shelfmark O.11.21e.²² This duodecimo was printed for Jacob Tonson and sold by Jonas Browne.²³

Notes

- 1 See below, p. 64. An advertisement for the first edition appears in *The Post Boy*, 28 January 1701. The music to the play was advertised separately in *The Post Boy* for 8 February 1701.
- 2 ESTC T66014 and N2690 are set from standing type, with some stop-press variants. See the list of variants for further details.
- 3 Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume, *The London Stage, 1660–1800: A New Version of Part 2, 1700–1729* ([Carbondale]: To be published by Southern Illinois University Press, [1996]), p. 16. This unpublished work is not widely available in print, but may be consulted at www.personal.psu.edu/faculty/h/b/hb1/London%20Stage%202001/.
- 4 As advertised in *The Lover*, Thursday, 4 March 1714.
- 5 Also consulted, British Library shelfmark: General Reference Collection 1606/1987.
- 6 For further details about the relationships between editions, see the list of variants.
- 7 Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume, 'Season of 1701–1702', in *The London Stage*, p. 48. The advertisement is in the *Post Boy* of 17–20 January 1702.
- 8 ESTC N13551 is 'Printed for Jacob Tonson, within Gray's-Inn-Gate'; for the variant 'sold by William Davis', see ESTC T56247. The title pages are partial resettings, identical above the lowermost rule. The variant title pages (and half-titles) were printed as the latter half of sheet K (the volume ends at Sig. K2v). That the advertisement in the *Post Man* of 2–4 February 1703 declares *Tamerlane* to be 'Printed and sold by Wm Davis' suggests that Davis was the printer of both variants. In 1704 William Davis also sells Tonson's editions of Dryden's plays *Aureng Zebe*, *The Conquest of Granada* and *The Spanish Fryar*.
- 9 See Margaret Boddy, 'Tonson's Loss of Rowe', *Notes & Queries* 13 (1966), pp. 213–14; and, on Pope's involvement in the contract with Lintot for *Jane Shore*, Alfred W. Hesse, 'Pope's Role in Tonson's "Loss of Rowe"', *Notes & Queries* 222 (1977), pp. 234–5.
- 10 *Post Man and the Historical Account*, 19 August 1714.
- 11 This set appears in ESTC as *Tragedies by N. Rowe* (T211029), where the only copy listed is held at the State Library of South Australia. The first volume of this set is missing. Fortunately the Harry Ransom Centre, University of Texas, Austin, Texas, holds a complete copy (shelfmark PR 3671 R5 A19 1714, not recorded in ESTC). The title page of the first volume runs: TRAGEDIES | BY | N. ROWE, Esq; | In Two Volumes. | [rule] | *Nos tamen hoc agimus, tenuiq; in pulvere sulcus | Dulcimus, & Littus sterili versamus aratro* | Juv. Sat. VII. | [rule] | [ornament] | LONDON: | Printed for Bernard Lintott between | the *Temple-Gates*, 1714.
- 12 John Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century*, nine vols (London: for the author, 1814), vol. 8, p. 303.
- 13 British Library, London, 642.b.27(2). Also consulted: Bodleian Library, Oxford, Dunston B 2164 and Vet. A4 f.560.
- 14 See advertisement in the *Daily Courant*, 20 November 1716. That the play is there said to be 'printed for' Browne may suggest that he placed the advertisement.
- 15 There are identical headpieces on 1717, p. 1, and J. P. Bosset, *Abrege de L'Essay de Mr. Locke. Sur L'Entendement Humain* (A Londres: Chez Jean Watts, 1720), p. 244 (the fleurons on sig. D12^v of 1717 are also present throughout). Thanks are due to Hazel Wilkinson, who supplied this evidence. Watts began working with the firm in 1707, was the printer of Rowe's Shakespeare, and enjoyed a long partnership with the Tonsons (see David Foxon, *Pope and the Early Eighteenth-Century Book Trade*, ed. and rev. by James McLaverty (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 12, 18; and Robert B. Hamm, Jr., 'Rowe's "Shakespear" (1709) and the Tonson House Style', *Collegiate Literature* 31 (2004), pp. 179–205 (pp. 183–4)).

- 16 Jonas began trading from his father Daniel Browne's shop in 1714. See Michael Treadwell, 'Browns of Every Description', *Bibliography Newsletter* II 8 (1974), p. 7.
- 17 'All' excludes *The Biter*, here and elsewhere. Browne, Mears and Woodward's advertisement is in the *Weekly Packet*, 30 April–2 May 1715. Lintot responds on 6 May in the *Daily Courant*.
- 18 *The Post Boy*, 7 June 1715.
- 19 See Silent corrections, p. 377.
- 20 Johnson, *Lives of the Poets*, p. 200.
- 21 The existence of this previously unidentified third edition was first noted by Malcolm Goldstein in his edition of *The Fair Penitent*. As Goldstein observes, the third edition 'includes all the substantive alterations of the 1703 text that appear in the first duodecimo [i.e. ESTC T138553 and N62136], along with others that appear in the third [i.e. ESTC T35176]' (Nicholas Rowe, *The Fair Penitent*, ed. Malcolm Goldstein (London: Edward Arnold, 1969), p. xiii).
- 22 Also consulted: British Library shelfmark: General Reference Collection 1607/5338.
- 23 On the relationship between Tonson and Browne, see above, p. 57.

Nicholas Rowe

***The Ambitious Step-mother* (1701)**

Transcript of copy-text (ESTC T21812)

Edited by Rebecca Bullard



Figure 2 The frontispiece to the third edition of *The Ambitious Step-mother. A Tragedy* (PR3671.R5A95 1714 Cage) © Folger Shakespeare Library 2016

THE AMBITIOUS
STEP-MOTHER.
A
TRAGEDY

Written by *N. ROWE*, Esq;

----- *Decet hæc dare dona novercam.* Ovid Metam. Lib. 9.¹

Vane Ligur, frustra que animis elate superbis.

Nequiequam — tentâsti lubricus artes

Adventit qui vestra dies muliebribus armis

Verba redargueret.

Virg. Æn. Lib. 11.²

The THIRD EDITION



Printed for *Jacob Tonson* at *Shakespear's Head*
Over-against *Catherine-Street* in the *Strand*.
MDCCXIV.

To the Right Honourable the

EARL of JERSEY,

Lord Chamberlain of His Majesty's Houshold, &c.³My *LORD*,

If any thing may atone for the Liberty I take in offering this Trifle to your Lordship, it is, that I will engage not to be guilty of the Common Vice of Dedications, nor pretend to give the World an Account of the many good Qualities they ought to admire in your Lordship. I hope I may reckon on it as some little Piece of Merit, in an Age where there are so many People write Panegyrics, and so few deserve 'em. I am sure you ought not to sit for your Picture, to so ill a Hand as mine. Men of your Lordship's Figure and Station, tho' Useful and Ornamental to the Age they live in, are yet reserv'd for the Labours of the Historian, and the Entertainment of Posterity; nor ought to be aspers'd with such Pieces of Flattery while living, as may render the true History suspected to those that come after. That which should take up all my Care at present, is most humbly to beg your Lordship's Pardon for Importuning you upon this Account; for imagining that your Lordship, (whose Hours are all dedicated to the best and most important Uses) can have any Leisure for this Piece of Poetry. I beg, my Lord, that you will receive it, as it was meant, a Mark of my Entire Respect and Veneration.

I hope it may be some advantage to me, that the Town has not receiv'd this Play ill; to have depended merely upon your Lordship's good Nature, and have offer'd something without any Degree of Merit, would have been an unpardonable Fault, especially to so good a Judge. The Play it self, as I present it to your Lordship, is a much more perfect Poem than it is in the Representation on the Stage. I was led into an Error in the writing of it, by thinking that it would be easier to retrench than to add: But when I was at last necessitated, by reason of the extreme Length, to cut off near six hundred Lines, I found that it was maim'd by it to a great Disadvantage. The Fable (which has no manner of Relation to any Part of true History) was left dark and intricate, for want of a great Part of the Narration, which was left out in the first Scene; and the Chain and Connexion, which ought to be in the Dialogue, was interrupted in many other Places. But since what was omitted in the Acting is now kept in, I hope it may indifferently Entertain your Lordship at an unbending Hour. The Faults which are most generally found, (and which I could be very proud of submitting to your Lordship's Judgment, if you can have leisure for so trivial a Cause,) are, that the Catastrophe in the fifth Act is barbarous, and shocks the Audience. Some People, whose Judgment I ought to have a Deference for, have told me that they wisht I had given the latter Part of the Story quite another turn; that *Artaxerxes* and *Amestris* ought to have been preserv'd, and made happy in the Conclusion of the Play; that besides the Satisfaction which the Spectators would have had to have seen two Virtuous (or at least Innocent) Characters, rewarded and successful, there might have been also a more Noble and Instructive Moral drawn

that way. I must confess if this be an Error, (as perhaps it may,) it is a voluntary one, and an Error of my Judgment: Since in the writing I actually made such a sort of an Objection to my self; and chose to wind up the Story this way. Tragedies have been allow'd, I know, to be written both ways very beautifully. But since Terror and Pity are laid down for the Ends of Tragedy by the great Master and Father of Criticism,⁴ I was always inclin'd to fancy, that the last and remaining Impressions, which ought to be left on the Minds of an Audience, should proceed from one of these two. They should be struck with Terror in several parts of the Play, but always Conclude and go away with Pity, a sort of regret proceeding from good Nature,⁵ which, tho' an Uneasiness, is not always disagreeable, to the Person who feels it. It was this Passion that the famous Mr. *Otway*⁶ succeeded so well in touching, and must and will at all times affect People, who have any Tenderness or Humanity. If therefore I had sav'd *Artaxerxes* and *Amestris*, I believe (with submission to my Judges) I had destroy'd the greatest occasion for Compassion in the whole Play. Any body may perceive, that she is rais'd to some degrees of Happiness by hearing that her Father and Husband are living, (whom she had suppos'd dead,) and by seeing the Enemy and Persecutor of her Family dying at her Feet, purposely, that the turn of her Death may be more^a surprizing and pitiful. As for that part of the Objection, which says, that innocent Persons ought not to be shewn unfortunate; The Success and general Approbation, which many of the best Tragedies that have been writ, and which were built on that foundation, have met with, will be a sufficient Answer for me.⁷

That which they call the Poetical Justice,⁸ is, I think, strictly observ'd, the two principal Contrivers of Evil, the Statesman and Priest, are punish'd with Death; and the Queen is depos'd from her Authority by her own Son; which, I suppose, will be allowed as the severest Mortification that could happen to a Woman of her Imperious Temper.

If there can be any Excuse for my Entertaining your Lordship with this *Detail* of Criticisms, it is, That I would have this first mark of the Honour I have for your Lordship appear with as few Faults as possible. Did not the prevailing Character of your Lordship's Excellent Humanity and good Nature encourage me, what ought I not to fear from the Niceness of your Taste and Judgment? The Delicacy of your Reflexions may be very fatal to so rough a Draught as this is; but if I will believe (as I am sure I ought to do) all Men that I have heard speak of your Lordship, they bid me hope every thing from your Goodness. This is that, I must sincerely own, which made me extremely Ambitious of your Lordship's Patronage for this Piece. I am but too sensible, that there are a Multitude of Faults in it; but since the good Nature of the Town has cover'd, or not taken notice of 'em, I must have so much Discretion, as not to look with an affected Nicety into 'em my self. With all the Faults and Imperfections which it may have, I must own, I shall be yet very well satisfied with it, if it gives me an Opportunity of reckoning my self from this time,

*Your Lordship's most Obedient
and devoted Humble Servant*

N. Rowe.

PROLOGUE,

Spoke by Mr. BETTERTON.^{9a}

If Dying Lovers yet deserve a Tear,
If a sad Story of a Maid's Despair }
Yet move Compassion in the pitying Fair,
This Day the Poet does his Art employ,
The soft Accesses of your Souls to try. 5
Nor let the Stoick boast his Mind unmov'd, }
The Brute Philosopher, who ne'er has prov'd
The Joy of Loving or of being Lov'd;
Who scorns his humane Nature to confess,
And striving to be more than Man, is less. 10
Nor let the Men, the weeping Fair accuse,
Those kind Protectors of the Tragick Muse,
Whose Tears did moving Otway's Labours crown,
*And made the poor Monimia's Grief their own:*¹⁰
Those Tears, their Art, not Weakness, has confest, 15
Their Grief approv'd the Niceness of their Tast, }
And they wept most, because they judg'd the best.
O! cou'd this Age's Writers hope to find
An Audience to Compassion thus inclin'd,
The Stage would need no Farce, nor Song nor Dance, 20
Nor Capering Monsieur brought from Active France. }
Clinch and his Organ-Pipe, his Dogs and Bear,
*To native Barnet might again repair;*¹¹
*Or breath, with Captain Otter, Bankside Air.*¹²
Majestick Tragedy shou'd once agen 25
In Purple Pomp adorn the swelling Scene.
Her search shou'd ransack all the Ancient's Store, }
The Fortunes of their Loves and Arms explore,
Such as might grieve you, but shou'd please you more.
What Shakespear durst not, this bold Age shou'd do, 30
And famous Greek and Latin Beauties show.
Shakespear, whose Genius is to its self a Law, }
Cou'd Men in every height of Nature draw,
*And copy'd all but Women that he saw.*¹³
Those Ancient Heroines your concern shou'd move, 35
Their Grief and Anger much, but most their Love;
For in the Account of every Age we find }
The best and fairest of that Sex were kind,
To Pity Always and to Love inclin'd.
Assert, ye fair Ones, who in Judgment sit, 40

*Your Ancient Empire over Love and Wit;
Reform our Sense, and teach the Men to Obey;
They'll leave their Tumbling if you lead the way.¹⁴
Be but what those before to Otway were;
Oh! were you but as Kind, we know you are as Fair.* 45

Dramatis Personae.

MEN.

Artaxerxes, <i>Prince of Persia, Eldest Son to the King Arsaces, by a former Queen.</i>	Mr. Verbruggen. ¹⁵
Artaban, <i>Son to Arsaces, by Artemisa.</i>	Mr. Booth. ¹⁶
Memnon, <i>Formerly General to Arsaces, now disgrac'd; a Friend to Artaxerxes.</i>	Mr. Betterton. ^{17a}
Mirza. <i>First Minister of State, in the Interest of Artemisa and Artaban.</i>	Mr. Freeman. ¹⁸
Magas, <i>Priest of the Sun, Friend to Mirza and the Queen.</i>	Mr. Bowman. ¹⁹
Cleanthes, <i>Friend to Artaban.</i>	Mr. Pack. ²⁰
Orchanes, <i>Captain of the Guards to the Queen.</i>	Mr. Baily. ²¹

WOMEN.

Artemisa, <i>Formerly the Wife of Tiribasus a Persian Lord, now Married to the King, and Queen of Persia.</i>	Mrs. Barry. ²²
Amestris, <i>Daughter to Memnon, in love with, and belov'd by Artaxerxes.</i>	Mrs. Bracegirdle. ²³
Cleone, <i>Daughter to Mirza, in love with Artaxerxes, and belov'd by Artaban.</i>	Mrs. Bowman. ²⁴
Beliza, <i>Confident to Cleone.</i>	Mrs. Martin. ²⁵

THE
Ambitious Step-mother.

ACT I. SCENE I.

SCENE *A Royal Palace.*^a

Enter at several Doors Mirza and Magas.

MIRZA.

WHAT bring'st thou, *Magas*? Say, how fares the King?

Mag. As one, whom when we number with the living,
We say the most we can; tho' sure it must
Be happier far, to quit a wretched Being,
Than keep it on such terms: For as I enter'd **5**
The Royal Lodging, an universal horror
Struck thro' my Eyes, and chill'd my very Heart;
The chearful Day was every where shut out
With care, and left a more than midnight darkness,
Such as might ev'n be felt: A few dim Lamps, **10**
That feebly lifted up their sickly Heads,
Lookt faintly thro' the Shade, and made it seem
More dismal by such light; while those that waited,
In solemn Sorrow, mixt with wild Amazement,
Observ'd a dreadful silence.

Mirz. Didst thou see him? **15**

Mag. My Lord, I did; treading with gentle Steps,
I reach'd the Bed, which held the poor remains
Of great *Arsaces*; just as I approacht,
His drooping Lids, that seem'd for ever clos'd,
Were faintly rear'd, to tell me that he liv'd: **20**
The Balls of Sight, dim and depriv'd of Motion,
Sparkled no more with that Majestick Fire,
At which ev'n Kings have trembled; but had lost
Their common useful Office, and were shaded
With an eternal Night; struck with a sight, **25**
That shew'd me human Nature fal'n so low,
I hastily retir'd.

Mirz. He dies too soon;
And Fate, if possible, must be delay'd.

The Thought that labours in my forming Brain,
 Yet crude and immature, demands more Time. 30
 Have the Physicians giv'n up all their hopes?
 Cannot they add a few days to a Monarch,
 In recompence of thousand vulgar Fates,
 Which their Drugs daily hasten?²⁶

Mag. As I past
 The outward Rooms, I found 'em in Consult; 35
 I askt 'em if their Art was at a stand,
 And could not help the King; they shook their Heads,
 And in most grave and solemn wise, unfolded
 Matter, which little purported, but words
 Rankt in right learned Phrase; all I could learn, was, 40
 That Nature's kindly warmth was quite extinct,
 Nor could the breath of Art kindle again
 Th'Ethereal Fire.²⁷

Mirz. My Royal Mistress *Artemisa*'s Fate,
 And all her Son young *Artaban*'s high hopes,
 Hang on this lucky Crisis; since this Day, 45
 The haughty *Artaxerxes* and old *Memnon*
 Enter *Persepolis*: The yearly Feast,
 Devoted to our Glorious God the Sun,
 Hides their Designs under a holy Veil;
 And thus Religion is a Mask for Faction.²⁸ 50
 But let their Guardian *Genii*²⁹ still be watchful,
 For if they chance to nod, my waking Vengeance
 Shall surely catch that moment to destroy 'em.

Mag. 'Tis said the fair *Amestris*, *Memnon*'s Daughter,
 Comes in their Company.

Mirz. That fatal Beauty, 55
 With most malignant influence, has crost
 My first and great Ambition. When my Brother,
 The great *Cleander*, fell by *Memnon*'s Hand,
 (You know the Story of our Houses Quarrel)
 I sought the King for Justice on the Murderer; 60
 And to confirm my Interest in the Court,
 In confidence of mighty Wealth and Power,
 A long descent from noble Ancestors,
 And somewhat of the Beauty of the Maid,
 I offer'd my *Cleone* to the Prince 65

Fierce *Artaxerxes*; he, with rude disdain
 Refus'd the Proffer; and to grate me more,
 Publickly own'd his Passion for *Amestris*;
 And in despite ev'n of his Father's Justice,
 Espous'd the Cause of *Memnon*. 70

Mag. Ev'n from that noted *Æra*, I remember
 You dated all your Service to the Queen,
 Our Common Mistress.

Mirz. 'Tis true, I did so; Nor was it in vain;
 She did me right, and satisfy'd my Vengeance; 75
Memnon was banisht, and the Prince disgrac'd
 Went into Exile with him. Since that time,
 Since I have been admitted to her Council,
 And have seen her, with unerring Judgment guide
 The Reins of Empire, I have been amaz'd, 80
 To see her more than manly strength of Soul,
 Cautious in good Success, in bad unshaken;
 Still arm'd against th'uncertain^b turns of Chance,
 Untouch'd by any weakness of her Sex,
 Their Superstition, Pity, or their Fear; 85
 And is a Woman only in her Cunning.
 What Story tells of great *Semiramis*,³⁰
 Or Rolling Time, that gathers as it goes,³¹
 Has added more, such *Artemisa* is.

Mag. Sure, 'twas a mark of an uncommon Genius 90
 To bend a Soul like that of great *Arsaces*,
 And Charm him to her sway.

Mirz. Certainly Fate,
 Or somewhat like the Force of Fate, was in it;
 And still whene'er Remembrance sets that Scene
 Before my Eyes, I view it with amazement. 95

Mag. I then was young, a Stranger to the Court,
 And only took the Story as reported
 By different Fame, you must have known it better.

Mirz. Indeed I did, then favour'd by the King,
 And by that means a Sharer in the Secret. 100
 Twas on a Day of publick Festival,
 When Beauteous *Artemisa* stood to view,

Behind the Covert of a Golden Lattice,³²
 The King and Court returning from the Temple;
 When just as by her Stand *Arsaces* past, **105**
 The Windows, by design or chance, fell down,
 And to his view expos'd her blushing Beauties.
 She seemed surpriz'd, and presently withdrew,
 But ev'n that moment was an age in Love:
 So was the Monarch's Heart for Passion moulded, **110**
 So apt to take at first the soft Impression.
 Soon as we were alone, I found the Evil
 Already past a Remedy, and vainly
 Urg'd the Resentment of her injur'd Lord:
 His Love was deaf to all.

Mag. Was *Tiribasus* absent? **115**

Mir. He was then General of the Horse,
 Under old *Memnon* in the *Median* War.
 But if that distant view so much had charm'd him,
 Imagine how he burnt, when, by my means,
 He view'd her Beauties nearer, when each Action, **120**
 And every graceful Sound conspir'd to charm him:
 Joy of her Conquest, and the hopes of Greatness
 Gave Lustre to her Charms, and made her seem
 Of more than mortal Excellence. In short,
 After some faint Resistance, like a Bride **125**
 That strives a while, tho' eager for the Bliss,
 The furious King enjoyed her,
 And to secure their Joys, a Snare was laid
 For her unthinking Lord, in which he fell
 Before the fame of this could reach his Ears.³³ **130**
 Since that, she still has by successful Arts
 Maintain'd that Power, which first her Beauty gain'd.³⁴

Mag. With deepest foresight, wisely has she laid
 A sure Foundation for^e the future Greatness
 Of *Artaban*, her only darling Son. **135**
 Each busie thought, that rous within her Breast,
 Labours for him; the King, when first he sicken'd,
 Declar'd he should succeed him in the Throne.

Mir. That was a Point well gain'd; nor were the Eldership
 Of *Artaxerxes* worth our least of Fears, **140**
 If *Memnon*'s Interest did not prop his Cause.

Since then they stand secur'd, by being join'd,
 From reach of open force; it were a Master-piece
 Worthy a thinking Head, to sow Division
 And seeds of Jealousie, to loose those Bonds **145**
 Which knit and hold 'em up, that so divided,
 With ease they might be ruin'd.

Mag. That's a difficulty, next to impossible.

Mirz. Cease to think so;
 The wise and active conquer Difficulties,
 By daring to attempt 'em; Sloth and Folly **150**
 Shiver and shrink at sight of toil and hazard,
 And make th'Impossibility they fear;
 Ev'n *Memnon*'s Temper seems to give th'occasion;
 Of Wrong impatient, headlong to Revenge;
 Tho' Bold, yet wants that Faculty of thinking, **155**
 That should direct his Anger. Valiant Fools
 Were made by Nature for the wise to work with;
 They are their Tools, and 'tis the Sport of Statesmen,
 When Heroes knock their knotty Heads together,³⁵
 And fall by one another.

Mag. What you've said, **160**
 Has wak'd a Thought in me which may be lucky;
 Ere he was banisht for your Brother's Murder,
 There was a Friendship 'twixt us; and tho' then
 I left his barren Soil, to root my self
 More safely under your auspicious Shade, **165**
 Yet still pretending Tyes of ancient Love,
 At his Arrival here I'll visit him;
 Whence this Advantage may at least be made,
 To ford his shallow Soul.³⁶

Mirz. Oh much, much more;
 'Twas happily remembred; nothing gulls **170**
 These open, unsuspecting Fools, like Friendship;
 Dull heavy things! Whom Nature has left honest
 In meer frugality, to save the Charge
 She's at in setting out a thinking Soul;
 Who, since their own short Understandings reach **175**
 No farther than the present, think ev'n the Wise,
 Like them, disclose the Secrets of their Breasts,

Speak what they think, and tell Tales of themselves:
Thy Function too will varnish o'er our Arts,
And sanctifie dissembling.

Mag. Yet still I doubt, **180**
His Caution may draw back, and fear a Snare.³⁷

Mirz. Tell him, the better to assist the Fraud,
That ev'n I wish his Friendship, and would gladly
Forget that cause of Hate, which long has held us
At mortal Distance, give up my Revenge, **185**
A grateful Offering to the publick Peace.

Mag. Could you afford him such a Bribe as that,
A Brother's Blood yet unatton'd —

Mirz. No *Magas*,
It is not in the Power of Fate^d to raze
That thought from out my Memory; **190**
Eternal Night, 'tis true, may cast a Shade
On all my Faculties, extinguish Knowledge;
And great Revenge may with my Being cease;
But while I am, that ever will remain,
And in my latest Spirits still survive. **195**
Yet, I would have thee promise that, and more,
The Friendship of the Queen, the Restitution
Of his Command, and Honours; that his Daughter
Shall be the Bride of *Artaban*; say any thing:^e
Thou know'st the Faith of Courtiers, and their Oaths, **200**
Like those of Lovers, the Gods laugh at 'em.

Mag. Doubt not my Zeal to serve our^f Royal Mistress,
And in her Interest yours, my Friend and Patron.

Mirz. My worthy Priest! Still be my Friend, and share
The utmost of my Power, by Greatness rais'd. [*Embracing.* **205**
Thou, like the God thou serv'st, shalt shine aloft,
And with thy Influence rule the under World.
But see! the Queen appears; she seems to muse,
Her thoughtful Soul labours with some Event
Of high import, which bustles like an Embryo **210**
In its dark Room, and longs to be disclos'd.
Retire, lest we disturb her. [*They retire to the side of the Stage.*

Enter the Queen attended.

Qu. Be fixt, my Soul, fixt on thy own firm Basis!
 Be constant to thy self; nor know the Weakness,
 The poor Irresolution of my Sex: **215**
 Disdain those shews of Danger, that would bar
 My way to Glory. Ye Diviner Pow'rs!
 By whom 'tis said we are, from whose bright Beings
 Those active Sparks were struck, which move our Clay;
 I feel, and I confess the Etherial Energy, **220**
 That busie restless Principle, whose Appetite
 Is only pleas'd with Greatness like your own:
 Why have you clogg'd it then with this dull Mass,^g
 And shut it up in Woman? Why debas'd it
 To an Inferiour part of the Creation? **225**
 Since your^h own heavenly Hands mistook my Lot,
 'Tis you have err'd, not I. Could Fate e'er mean
 Me, for a Wife, a Slave to *Tiribasis*!
 To such a thing as he! a Wretch! a Husband!
 Therefore in just Assertion of my self, **230**
 I shook him off, and past those narrow Limits,
 Which Laws contrive in vain for Souls born great.
 There is not, must not be a Bound for Greatness;
 Power gives a Sanction, and makes all things just.
 Ha! *Mirza*! Worthy Lord! I saw thee not [*Seeing Mirza.* **235**
 So busie were my Faculties in thought.

Mirz. The Thoughts of Princes dwell in sacred Privacy,
 Unknown and venerable to the Vulgar;³⁸ [*Bowing.*
 And like a Temple's innermost Recesses,
 None enters, to behold the hallow'd Mysteries, **240**
 Unbidden of the God that dwells within.

Qu. Wise *Mirza*! were my Soul a Temple, fit
 For Gods, and Godlike Counsels to inhabit,
 Thee only would I chuse of all Mankind,
 To be the Priest, still favour'd with access; **245**
 Whose piercing Wit, sway'd by unerring Judgment,
 Might mingle ev'n with assembled Gods,
 When they devise unchangeable Decrees,
 And call 'em Fate.

Mirz. Whate'er I am, each Faculty,
 The utmost Power of my exerted Soul **250**

Preserves a Being only for your Service;
And when I am not yours, I am no more.

Qu. Time shall not know an end of my Acknowledgements,
But every Day of our continu'd Lives
Be witness of my Gratitude: to draw 255
The Knot, which holds our common Interest, closer,
Within six Days, my Son, my *Artaban*,
Equally dear to me as Life and Glory,
In publick shall Espouse the fair *Cleone*,
And be my Pledge of everlasting Amity. 260

Mirz. O Royal Lady! you out-bid my Service;
And all returns are vile, but Words the poorest.

Qu. Enough! be as thou hast been, still my Friend;
I ask no more. But I observe of late,
Your Daughter grows a Stranger to the Court; 265
Know you the Cause?

Mirz. A melancholy Girl;
Such in her Infancy her Temper was,
Soft even beyond her Sex's tenderness;
By Nature pitiful, and apt to grieve
For the Mishaps of others, and so make 270
The Sorrows of the wretched World her own;
Her Closet and the Gods share all her time,
Except when (only by oneⁱ Maid attended)
She seeks some shady solitary Grove,
Or by the gentle Murmurs^j of some Brook 275
Sits sadly listning to a Tale of Sorrow,
Till with her Tears she swell the narrow Stream.

Qu. It is not well; these Thoughts must be remov'd:
That eating Canker Grief, with wastful spight,
Preys on the Rosie bloom of Youth and Beauty: 280
But Love shall chace away these Clouds of Sadness;
My Son shall breathe so warm a gale of Sighs,
As shall dissolve those Isicles, that hang
Like Death about her Heart.
Attend us, holy *Magas*,^k to the King, 285
Nor cease to importune the mighty Gods
To grant him Health, tho' much I fear in vain.

[*Ex. Queen, Magas, and Attendants.*]

Manet Mirza.

Mirza. This meddling Priest longs to be found a Fool;
 Thinks he that *Memnon*, Soldier as he is,
 Thoughtless and dull, will listen to his soothing? **290**
 Howe'er, I gave his wise Proposal way,
 Nay, urg'd him to go on; the shallow Fraud
 Will ruin him for ever with my Enemies,
 And make him firmly mine, spite of his Fears,
 And natural Inconstancy. **295**
 While Choice remains he will be still unsteady,
 And nothing but Necessity can fix him. [*Exit.*

Enter Artaxerxes, Memnon, and Attendants.

Artax. Methinks, my noble Father and my Friend,
 We enter here like Strangers, and unlook'd for:
 Each busie Face we meet, with wonder starts, **300**
 And seems amaz'd to see us.

Mem. Well may th'ignoble Herd
 Start, if with heedless steps they unawares
 Tread on the Lion's walk; a Prince's Genius
 Awes with superior¹ Greatness all beneath him.
 With wonder they behold the great *Arsaces* **305**
 Reviv'd again in Godlike *Artaxerxes*.
 In you they see him, such as oft they did
 Returning from his Wars, and crow'd with Conquest,
 When all our Virgins met him on the way,
 And with their Songs and Dances blest his Triumph: **310**
 Now basely aw'd by factious Priests and Women,
 They start at Majesty, and seem surpriz'd,
 As if a God had met 'em. In Honour's Name,
 Why have we let this be? Why have we languish'd?
 And suffer'd such a Government as this **315**
 To waste our Strength, and wear our Empire low?

Art. Curst be the means by which these Ills arose
 Fatal alike to me as to my Country;
 Which my great Soul, unable to revenge,
 Has yet with Indignation only seen, **320**
 Cut off by Arts of Coward Priests and Statesmen,
 Whom I disdain'd with servile Smiles to court,
 From the great Right which God and Nature gave,
 My Birthright to a Throne.

Mem. Nor Priests nor Statesmen
 Could have compleated such an Ill as that, **325**
 If Woman had not mingled in the Mischief;
 If *Artemisa* had not, by her Charms,
 And all her Sex's Cunning, wrought the King,
 Old, obvious to³⁹ her Arts, decay'd in Greatness,
 Dead to the Memory of what once he was, **330**
 Just crawling on the Verge of wretched Life,
 A Burthen to himself, and his Friends Pity;
 Among his other Failings, to forget
 All that a Father and a King could owe
 To such a Son as you were; to cut you off **335**
 From your Succession, from your Hopes of Empire,
 And graft her upstart Off-spring on to Royalty.

Artax. But if I bear^m it,
 Oh may I live to be my Brother's Slave,
 The Scorn of those brave Friends that own my Cause; **340**
 May you my Father spurn me for a Coward,
 May all my noble Hopes of Love and Glory
 Leave me to vile Despair. By Heaven, my Heart
 Stirs lighter in my Bosom, when I think
 That I this Day shall meet the Boy my Brother, **345**
 Whose young Ambition with aspiring Wings
 Dares ev'n to mate⁴⁰ my Greatness.

Mem. Fame, that speaks
 Minutely every Circumstance of Princes,
 Describes him bold, and fiercely fond of Power,
 Which ev'n in spight of Nature he affects: **350**
 Impatient of Command, and hardly daigning
 To be controll'd by his Imperious Mother.
 'Tis said too (as no means were left untry'd,
 Which might prepare and fit him to contend
 With a superior Right of Birth and Merit) **355**
 That Books, and the politer Arts, (which those
 Who know admire) have been his Care; already
 He mingles in their Councils, and they trust
 His Youth with Secrets of important Villany.
 The Crowd, taught by his Creatures to admire him, **360**
 Stile him a God in Wisdom.

Artax. Be that his Glory;
 Let him with Pedants hunt for Praise in Books,

Pore out his Life amongst the lazy Gown-men,
 Grow old and vainly proud in fancy'd Knowledge,
 Unequal to the Task of vast Ambition. **365**
 Ambition! The Desire of active Souls,
 That pushes 'em beyond the Bounds of Nature,
 And elevates the Hero to the Gods.
 But see! my Love, your beauteous Daughter comes.
 And ev'n Ambition sickensⁿ at her Sight. **370**

Enter Amestris attended.

Revenge and fierce Desires of Glory, cease
 To urge my Passions, master'd by her Eyes;
 And only gentle Fires now warm my Breast.

Amest. I come, my Father to attend your Order. [*To Mem.*]

Mem. 'Tis well; and I would have thee still be near me: **375**
 The Malice of the Faction which I hate,
 Would vent it self even on thy Innocence,
 Wert thou not safe under a Father's Care.

Art. Oh say a Lover's too; no can you have
 An Interest in her Safety more than mine. **380**
 Love gives a Right superior ev'n to Nature;
 Or Love is Nature, in the noblest meaning,⁴¹
 The Cause and the Preserver of the World.
 These Arms that long to press thee to my Bosom,
 For ever shall defend thee. **385**

Mem. Therefore, my Son,
 Unto your Care I leave our common Charge;
Tigranes with our Friends expects my Orders;
 Those when I have dispatcht, upon the Instant
 I will return, and meet at your Apartment. [*Ex. Mem.*]

Art. Come to my Arms, and let me hide thee there **390**
 From all those Fears that vex thy beating Heart,
 Be safe and free from all those fancy'd Dangers,
 That haunt thy Apprehension.

Ames. Can you blame me?
 If from Retirement drawn and pleasing Solitude,
 I fear to tempt this stormy Sea the World, **395**

Whose every Beach is strew'd with Wrecks of Wretches,
That daily perish in it. Curst Ambition!
Why dost thou come to trouble my Repose,
Who have ev'n from my Infancy disclaim'd thee?

Art. Cease to complain, my Love; and let no Thought 400
But what brings Peace and Joy approach thy Breast.
Let me impart my manly Fires to thee,
To warm thy Fancy to a Taste of Glory;
Imperial Power and Purple Greatness wait thee,
And sue for thy Acceptance; by the Sun, 405
And by *Arsaces* Head, I will not mount
The Throne of *Cyrus*,⁴² but to share it with thee.

Ames. Vain shews of Happiness! Deceitful Pageantry!
Ah! Prince, hadst thou but known the Joys which dwell
With humbler Fortunes, thou wouldst curse thy Royalty. 410
Had Fate allotted us some obscure Village,
Where only blest with Life's Necessities,
We might have pass'd in Peace our happy Days,
Free from the Cares which Crowns and Empires bring;
There no Step-mother, no Ambitious Brother, 415
No wicked Statesman^o would with Impious Arts,
Have strove to wrest from us our small Inheritance,
Or stir the simple Hinds⁴³ to noisie Faction,
Our Nights had all been blest with balmy Slumbers,
And all our waking Hours been crown'd with Love. 420

Art. Exquisite Charmer! now by *Orosmades*⁴⁴
I swear, thy each soft Accent melts my Soul:
The Joy of Conquest, and Immortal Triumph,
Honour and Greatness, all that fires the Hero
To high Exploits, and everlasting Fame, 425
Grows vile in sight of thee. My haughty Soul,
By Nature fierce, and panting after Glory,
Could be content to live obscure with thee,
Forgotten and unknown of all, but my *Amestris*.

Ames. No, Son of great *Arsaces*, though my Soul 430
Shares in my Sex's Weakness, and would fly
From Noise and Faction, and from fatal Greatness,
Yet for thy Sake, thou Idol of my Heart,
(Nor will I blush to own the sacred Flame,
Thy Sighs and Vows have kindled in my Breast) 435

For thy lov'd Sake, spight of my boding Fears,
I'll meet the Danger which Ambition brings,
And treat one Path with thee: Nor shalt thou lose
The glorious Portion which thy Fate designs thee,
For thy *Amestris* Fears.

Art. Give me those Fears; **440**
For all things will be well.

Ames. Grant it, ye Powers:
This Day before your Altars will I kneel,
Where all my Vows shall for my Prince be offer'd;
Still let Success attend him, let Mankind
Adore in him your visible Divinity; **445**
Nor will I importune for you myself,
But sum up all I ask in *Artaxerxes*.

Art. And doubt not but the Gods will kindly hear
Their Virgin Votary, and grant her Pray'r;
Our glorious Sun, the source of Light and Heat, **450**
Whose Influence cheers the World he did create,
Shall smile on thee from his Meridian Skies,
And own the kindred Beauties of thy Eyes;
Thy Eyes which, could his own fair Beams decay,
Might shine for him, and bless the World with Day. [*Exe.* **455**

ACT II. SCENE I.

SCENE *An Apartment of the Palace.*^a

Enter Memnon and Magas.

Mem. Those who are wise in Courts, my holy Sir,
Make Friendships with the Ministers of State,
Nor seek the Ruins of a wretched Exile,
Lest there should be Contagion in Misfortunes,
And make the Alliance fatal.

Mag. Friends like *Memnon* **5**
Are worth being sought in Danger; since this Age
Of most flagitious⁴⁵ Note degenerates
From the fam'd Vertue of our Ancestors,

And leaves but few Examples of their Excellence,
Whom should we seek for Friendships but those few, 10
Those happy few, within whose Breasts alone,
The Footsteps of lost Virtue yet remain?

Mem. I prithee Peace! for nothing misbecomes
The Man that would be thought a Friend, like Flattery;
Flattery! the meanest kind of base dissembling, 15
And only us'd to catch the grossest Fools:
Besides, it stains the Honour of thy Function,
Which, like the Gods thou serv'st, should be sincere.

Mag. By that Sincerity, by all the Service
My Friendship can express, I would approve it; 20
And tho' I went not from *Persepolis*
Companion of your Exile, yet my Heart
Was with you still; and what I could I did,
Beseeching every God for your Return;
Nor were those Vows in vain, since once again 25
'Tis given me to behold my Friend, nay more,
Would you agree, to keep you here for ever.

Mem. The Gods, 'tis true, are just, and have, I hope,
At length decreed an end of my Misfortunes;
At least they give me this, to dye with Honour, 30
When Life grows vile or burthensome.

Mag. By me they offer all that you can ask.
And point an easie way to Happiness.
Spare then the Wounds our wretched Country fears,
The thousand Ills which Civil Discord brings. 35
Oh still that Noise of War, whose dread Alarms
Frightens Repose from Country Villages,
And stirs rude Tumult up and wild Distraction
In all our peaceful Cities.

Mem. Witness for me,
Ye awful Gods, who view our inmost Thoughts 40
I took not Arms, 'till urg'd by self-defence,
The eldest Law of Nature,⁴⁶
Impute not then those Ills which may insue
To me, but those who with incessant hate
Pursue my Life; whose Malice spreads the Flame 45

To every Part, that my devoted Fabrick
May in the universal Ruin burn.

Mag. And yet even there perhaps you judge too rashly;
Impetuous Passion hurries you so fast,
You cannot mark th' Advantage of your Fortune. **50**

Mem. Has not the Law been urg'd to set a brand
Of foul dishonour on my hoary Head?
Ha! am I not Proscrib'd?

Mag. Forget that thought,
That jarring grates your Soul, and turns the Harmony
Of Blessed Peace to curst infernal Discord. **55**
Hate and its fatal Causes all shall cease,
And *Memnon*'s Name be honour'd as of old,
The bravest and the most successful Warrior,
The fortunate Defender of his Country.

Mem. 'Tis true, (nor will it seem a Boast to own) **60**
I have fought well for *Persia*, and repay'd
The Benefit of Birth with honest Service;
Full fifty Years harnest in rugged Steel,
I have endur'd the biting Winters blast,
And the severer Heats of parching Summer; **65**
While they who loll'd at home on lazy Couches
Amidst a Crew of Harlots and soft Eunuchs,
Were at my Cost secure in Luxury.
This is a Justice *Mirza*'s self must do me.

Mag. Even he, tho' fatal Accidents have set **70**
A most unhappy Bar between your Friendship,
Lamenting that there had been Cause of Enmity,
And owning all the Merit of your Virtues,
Will often wish Fate had ordain'd you friends.

Mem. Our God the Sun shall sooner change his Course, **75**
And all the Impossibilities, which Poets
Count to Extravagance of loose Description,
Shall sooner be.

Mag. Yet hear me, noble *Memnon*;
When by the Duty of my Priesthood mov'd,

And in just Detestation of the Mischiefs **80**
 Intestine Jars produce, I urg'd wise *Mirza*,
 By his Concurrence, Help, and healing Counsels,
 To stop those Wounds at which his Country bleeds;
 Griev'd at the Thought, he vow'd, his whole Endeavour
 Should be to close those Breaches: **85**
 That even *Cleander's* Death, and all those Quarrels
 That long have nourish'd Hatred in your Houses,
 Should be in Joy of publick Peace forgotten.

Mem. Oh couldst thou charm the Malice of a Statesman,
 And make him quit his Purpose of Revenge, **90**
 Thy Preaching might reform the guilty World,
 And Vice would be no more.

Mag. Nay, even the Queen
 Will bind the Confirmation by her Son,
 And asks the fair *Amestris* for Prince *Artaban*.

Mem. Were that the only Terms, it were impossible. **95**

Mag. You would not shun the Alliance^b of a Prince?

Mem. No; for it is the Glory of my Fate,
 That *Artaxerxes* is design'd my Son,
 With every Grace and Royal Vertue crown'd;
 Great, Just and Merciful, such as Mankind, **100**
 (When, in the Infant World, first Governments
 Began by choice^c)⁴⁷ would have design'd a King.

Mag. Unbounded Power, and height of Greatness, give
 To Kings that Lustre, which we think Divine;
 The Wise who know 'em, know they are but Men, **105**
 Nay, sometimes weak ones too; the Crowd indeed,
 Who kneel before the Image, not the God,
 Worship the Deity their Hands have made.
 The Name of *Artaban* will be as great
 As that of *Cyrus*,⁴⁸ when he shall possess **110**
 (As sure he shall) his Throne.

Mem. Ha! What means he!
 This Villain Priest! but hold my Rage a little,
 And learn Dissimulation; I'll try him farther. [*Aside*.]

You talk in Riddles, when you name a Throne,
And *Artaban*; the Gods, who portion out **115**
The Lots of Princes as of private Men,
Have put a Bar between his Hopes and Empire.

Mag. What Bar?

Mem. The best, an Elder Brother's Claim.

Mag. That's easily remov'd, the King their Father
On just and weighty Reasons has decreed **120**
His Scepter to the younger; add to this,
The joint Concurrence of our *Persian* Lords,
Who only want your Voice to make it firm.

Mem. Can I? Can they? Can any honest Hand,
Join in an Act like this? Is not the Elder **125**
By Nature pointed out for Preference?
Is not his Right inroll'd among those Laws
Which keep the World's vast Frame in beauteous Order?
Ask those thou namest but now, what made them Lords?
What Titles had they had, if Merit only **130**
Could have conferr'd a Right? If Nature had not
Strove hard to thrust the worse^d deserving first,
And stamp't the noble Mark of Eldership
Upon their baser Mettal?

Mag. Sure there may be
Reasons, of so much Power and cogent Force, **135**
As may even set aside this Right of Birth;
If Sons have Rights, yet Fathers have 'em too.
'Twere an invidious Task to enter into
The Insolence, and other Faults which mov'd
Royal *Arsaces* to a just Displeasure **140**
Against his Eldest Son, Prince *Artaxerxes*.

Mem. Ha! dare not for thy Life, I charge thee dare not
To brand the spotless Virtue of my Prince
With Falshoods of most base and damn'd Contrivance.
I tell thee, envious Priest, should the just Gods **145**
Require severe Account of thy past Life,
And charge Remembrance to dispose thy Crimes
In rank and hideous Order to thy View,
Horror and Guilt of Soul would make thee mad.

Mag. You take the matter farther than I meant it; **150**
 My Friendship only aims at your Advantage,
 Would point you out a way to Peace and Honour,
 And in return of this, your Rage unkindly
 Loads me with Injuries.

Mem. Away! I cannot bare thy base dissembling; **155**
 My honest Soul disdains thee and thy Friendship.
 How hast thou dar'd to think so vilely of me;
 That I would condescend to thy mean Arts,
 And traffick with thee for a Prince's Ruin;
 A Prince! the Joy and Honour of Mankind, **160**
 As much superior to the rest of Kings,
 As they themselves are above common Men,
 And is the very Image of the Gods.
 Wert thou not privileg'd, like Age and Women,
 My Sword should reach thee, and revenge the Wrong **165**
 Thy Tongue has done his Fame.

Mag. Ungrateful Lord!
 Would'st thou invade my Life, as a return
 For proffer'd Love? But let th'e'vent declare
 How great a good, by me sincerely offer'd,
 Thy dull Romantick⁴⁹ Honour has refus'd. **170**
 And since I have discharg'd the Debt I ow'd
 To former Friendship, if the Gods hereafter
 Send Ruin down, and plague thee with Confusion,
 Remember me in vain, and curse thy Folly. [*Ex. Mag.*]

Mem. No, my Remembrance treasures honest Thoughts, **175**
 And holds not things like thee; I scorn thy Friendship;
 And would not owe my Life to such a Villain;
 But thou art hardly Saint enough to prophecy.
 Were all thy Tribe like thee, it might well startle
 Our Lay unlearned Faith, when thro' such Hands **180**
 The Knowledge of the Gods is reach'd to Man.
 But thus those Gods instruct us, that not all
 (Who like Intruders thrust into their Service,
 And turn the Holy Office to a Trade)
 Participate their sacred Influence. **185**
 This then is your own Cause, ye awful Powers,
 Revenge your selves, your violated Altars,
 That those who with unhallow'd Hands approach,
 May tremble at your Justice. [*Ex. Memnon.*]

SCENE II. *The Palace.*

Enter the Queen, Artaban, Mirza, Magas, and Attendants.

Artab. My Brother then is come.

Mirz. My Lord, I saw him,
With him old haughty *Memnon*; as they past,
With fierce disdain they view'd the gazing Crowd,
And with dumb Pride seem'd to neglect that Worship,
Which yet they wish'd to find; this way they move, **5**
'Tis said to ask an Audience of the King.

Qu. *Mirza*, 'tis well; I thank thy timely Care;
Here will we face this Storm of Insolence,
Nor fear the noisie Thunder; let it rowl,
Then burst, and spend at once its idle Rage. **10**

Artab. Why meet we thus like wrangling Advocates,
To urge the Justice of our Cause with Words?
I hate this parle, 'tis tame; if we must meet
Give me my Arms, and let us stake at once
Our Rights of Merit and of Eldership, **15**
And prove like Men our Title.

Mirz. 'Twere unsafe;
They come surrounded by a Crowd of Friends:
To strike thro' these were dangerous and rash.
Fate waits for 'em elsewhere with certain Ruin;
From *Mirza*'s Hand expect it.

Qu. Be it so: **20**
Auspicious Sage, I trust thee with my Fortune,
My Hopes of Greatness; do thou guide 'em all,
For me and for thy self. My Son give way,
Nor let thy hasty Youth disturb with Outrage
The present necessary Face of Peace; **25**
Occasions great and glorious will remain
Worthy thy Arms and Courage.

Artab. I obey,
And willingly resign th'unmanly Task;
Words are indeed your Province.

Mirz. My Royal Mistress,
Prepare to meet with more than brutal Fury **30**
From the fierce Prince and *Memnon*.

Qu. Well I know
The Insolence and native Pride of each:
With scurril⁵⁰ Taunts and blackest Infamy
They load my Name: But let the Wretches rail;
A Woman's Vengeance waits 'em. **35**

Mirz. They are here.

Enter Artaxerxes, Memnon, and Attendants.

Artax. Ye tutelar Gods, who guard this Royal Fabrick
And thou, O *Orosmades*,⁵¹ the Protector
Of the great *Persian* Race, Ere yet my Father,
Royal *Arsaces*, mingle with your Godheads,
Grant me once more to lay before his Feet **40**
His eldest born, his once lov'd *Artaxerxes*,
To offer my Obedience to his Age;
All that a Son can owe to such a Father.
You, who with haggard Eyes stare wildly on me,
If (as by your Attendance here you seem) **45**
You serve the King my Father, lead me to him.

Qu. And dost thou wonder that Mankind should start,
When Parricides and Rebels, in despight
Of Nature, Majesty, and Reverend Age,
With Impious Force, and Ruffian Violence, **50**
Would rob a King and Father of his Life;
Cut off his short Remains —

Artax. Ha! sayst thou, Woman;
I prethee peace, and urge not a Reply,
I would not hold Acquaintance with thy Infamy.

Qu. Ye Righteous Powers, whose Justice awes the World, **55**
Let not your Thunders sleep when Crimes like these
Stalk in the open Air.

Artax. Thy Priest instructs thee,
Else sure thou hadst not dar'd to tempt the Gods,

And trifle with their Justice: Canst thou name it
 And look on me? on me, whom thy Curs't Arts **60**
 Have strove to bar from native Right to Empire,
 Made me a Stranger to a Father's Love,
 And broke the bands of Nature, which once held me
 The nearest to his Heart.

Qu. Had he not reason?
 When thou with Rebel Insolence didst dare **65**
 To own and to protect that hoary Ruffian, [*Pointing to Mem.*
 And in despite even of thy Father's Justice,
 To stir the Factious Rabble up to Arms
 For him; and make a Murderer's Cause thy own.

Mem. I had another Name (nor shouldst thou move me **70**
 Insulting Queen, to Words, did not remembrance
 With Horror sting my Soul for *Tiribasus*,
 Thy murder'd Lord)^{Aa} when by my fatal Orders,
 And by his own high Courage urg'd he fell,
 To make thy way to guilty Greatness easie. **75**
 I thought him then a Traytor (for thy Arts
 Had taught the Royal Mandate so to call him)
 Too big for publick Justice; and on that Pretence
 Consented to the Snare, that catcht his Life;
 So my obedient Honesty was made **80**
 The Pander to thy Lust and black Ambition.
 Except the Guilt of that accursed Day,
 In all my Iron Years of Wars and Danger,
 From blooming Youth down to decaying Age,
 My Fame ne'er knew a Stain of foul Dishonour; **85**
 And if that make me guilty, think what thou art,
 The Cause and the Contriver of that Mischief.

Qu. What namest thou *Tiribasus*, be his Guilt
 Forgotten with his Memory. Think on *Cleander*,
 And let the Furies that enquire for Blood, **90**
 Stir Horror up, and bitterest Remorse,
 To gnaw thy anxious Soul. Oh great *Cleander*!^b
 Unworthy was thy Fate, thou first of Warriors,
 To fall beneath a base Assassin's Stab,
 Whom all the thirsty Instruments of Death **95**
 Had in the Field of Battle fought in vain.

Mem. In sight of Heaven, and of the equal Gods,
I will avow that my Revenge was just;
My injur'd Honour could not ask for less:
Since he refus'd to do a Soldier's Justice, **100**
I us'd him as I ought.

Qu. Amazing Boldness!
And dar'st thou call that Act a Soldier's Justice?
Didst thou not meet him with dissembled Friendship,
Hiding the Rancour of thy Heart in Smiles?
When he (whose open unsuspecting Nature **105**
Thought thee, a Soldier, honest as himself)
Came to the Banquet as secure of Peace.
By mutual Vows renew'd; and in the Revel
Of that luxurious Day, forgetting Hate
And every Cause of ancient Animosity, **110**
Devoted all his Thoughts to Mirth and Friendship;
Then *Memnon* (at an Hour when few are Villains,
The sprightly Juice infusing gentler Thoughts,
And kindling Love ev'n in the coldest Breasts,)
Unequal to him in the Face of War, **115**
Stole on *Cleander* with a Coward's Malice,
And struck him to the Heart.

Mem. By the stern God,
By *Mars*,⁵² the Patron of my honour'd Wars,
'Tis basely false. In his own drunken brawl
The Boaster fell. I bore his lavish Tongue, **120**
Nor thought him worth my Sword, till (his cold Temper
Warm'd with the Wine) he dar'd me to the Combat;
Then pleas'd to meet him in that Fit of Valour,
I took him at his Word, and (with my Sword
Drawn against his in equal Opposition) **125**
I kill'd him while it lasted.

Artax. Cease we, my Friend,
This Womens War of railing; when they talk,
Men should be still, and let Noise tire it self.
I came to find a Father, tho' my Fears
Suggest the worst of Evils to my Thoughts, **130**
And make me dread to hear *Arsaces* Fate.
Lead, *Memnon*, to the Presence.

Qu. Prince, you pass not;
Guards keep the Door; the King your Father lives —

Artax. Ha! — if he lives, why lives he not to me?
Why am I thus shut out and banisht from him? **135**
Why are my Veins rich with his Royal Blood?
Why did he give me Life, if not to serve him?
Forbid me not to wait upon his Bed,
And watch his sickly Slumbers, that my Youth
May with its Service glad his drooping Age, **140**
And his cold Hand may bless me 'ere he dye.
Nay, be a Queen, and rob me of his Crown,
But let me keep my Right to filial Piety.

Qu. Well hast thou urg'd the specious Name of Duty
To hide deform'd Rebellion; hast thou not **145**
With thy false Arts poyson'd his People's Loyalty?
What meant thy pompous Progress thro' the Empire?
Thy vast Profusion to the Factious Nobles,
Whose Interest sways the Croud, and stirs up Mutiny?
Why did thy haughty, fierce, disdainful Soul **150**
Stoop to the meanest Arts which catch the Vulgar?
Herd with 'em, fawn upon 'em, and caress 'em;
Appeal to them, to them relate thy Wrong,
And make them Judges of thy Father's Justice?
Thy cruel and unnatural Lust of Power **155**
Have sunk thy Father more than all his Years,
And made him wither in a green old Age.

Artax. False all as Hell: Nor had I arm'd my Friends
But to defend that right —

Qu. Dost thou not come,
Impatient of Delay, to hasten Fate? **160**
To bring that Death, the lingering Disease
Would only for a Day or two defer?

Artax. I hear thee, and disdain thy little Malice,
That dares to stain my Virtue with a Crime
It views with most Abhorrence; but Reproach **165**
Is lost on thee, since Modesty, with all
The Vertues that adorn thy Sex, is fled.

Qu. Audacious Rebel!

Artax. Infamous Adultress!
Stain of my Father's Bed, and of his Throne!

Artab. Villain! thou ly'st! oh Madam give me way, **170**
[*To the Queen, who holds him, drawing his Sword.*
Whatever bars my Fury calls me base,
Unworthy of the Honour of your Son.

Qu. Hold *Artaban*! My Honour suffers not
From his lewd Breath, nor shall thy Sword prophane,
With Brawls or Blood, the Reverence of this Place, **175**
To Peace and sacred Majesty devoted.

Artax. Ha! Who art thou? [*To Artab.*

Artab. The Son of great *Arsaces*.

Artax. No! 'Tis false! thy forging Mother's damn'd Contrivance,
Seek for thy Father in that plotting Fellow;
The Hero's Race disclaims thee. Why dost thou frown, **180**
And knit thy boyish Brow? Dost thou dare ought
Worthy the Rank of the Divine *Arsacides*?
If so, come forth, break from that Womans Arms,
And meet me with thy good Sword like a Man.

Artab. Yes! *Artaxerxes*, yes! thou shalt be met: **185**
The mighty Gods have held us in the Balance,
And one of us is doom'd to sink for ever.
Nor can I bear a long Delay of Fate,
But wish the great Decision were even now.
Proud and Ambitious Prince, I dare like thee, **190**
All that is Great and Glorious. Like thine,
Immortal Thirst of Empire fires my Soul,
My Soul, which of superior Power impatient,
Disdains thy Eldership; therefore in Arms
(Which give the noblest Right to Kings) I will **195**
To Death dispute with thee the Throne of *Cyrus*.

Artax. Do this, and thou art worthy of my Anger:
Oh Energy Divine of great Ambition,
That can inform the Souls of beardless Boys,
And ripen 'em to Men in spite of Nature! **200**
I tell thee, Boy, that Empire is a Cause,
For which the Gods might wage Immortal War.

Then let thy Soule exert her utmost Vertue,
 And think at least thou art *Arsaces* Son,
 That the Idea of thy fancy'd Father **205**
 May raise and animate thy lesser Genius,
 And make thee fit to meet my Arms in Battel.

Artab. Oh doubt not but my Soul is charm'd with greatness
 So much, it rivals even the Joy of Knowledge
 And sacred Wisdom. What makes Gods Divine, **210**
 But Power and Science⁵³ Infinite?
 Hear only this; our Father, prest by Age,
 And a long Train of Evils which that brings,
 Languishes in the last Extremes of Life:
 Since thou would'st blot my Birth with base Dishonour, **215**
 Be this my Proof of filial Piety,
 While yet he lives cease we our Enmity;
 Nor let the hideous Noise of War disturb
 His parting Soul.

Artax. I take thee at thy Word:
 Let his remains of Life be Peace betwixt us, **220**
 And after that, let all our time be War.
 Remember when we meet, since one must fall,
 Who Conquers and Survives, Survives to Empire.

[*Exe. severally, Queen and Artab. Artax. Mem. cum suis.*⁵⁴
*Manent Mirza and Magas.*⁵⁵

Mirz. Most fortunate Event! which gives us more
 Than even our Wishes could have askt. This Truce **225**
 Gives lucky Opportunity for thinking;
 'Twill lull these Thoughtless Heroes to Security.

Mag. Th'approaching Festival will more confirm it:
 Of all those sacred Times which heretofore
 Religion has distinguisht from the rest, **230**
 And to the Service of the Gods devoted,
 This has been still most venerable held.
 Among the Vulgar, Toil and Labour ceases;
 With Chaplets⁵⁶ crown'd, they dance to the shrill Pipe,
 And in their Songs invoke those milder Deities, **235**
 That soften anxious Life with Peace and Pleasure;
 Slaves are enfranchis'd, and inveterate Foes
 Forget, or at the least suspend their Hate,

And meet like Friends. Pernicious Discord seems
 Out rooted from our more than Iron Age:⁵⁷ **240**
 The Gods are worshipt with unusual Reverence,
 Since none, not ev'n our Kings, approach their Temples
 With any Mark of Wars destructive Rage,
 But Sacrifice unarm'd.

Mirz. A lucky Thought
 Is in my Mind at once compleatly form'd, **245**
 Like *Grecian Pallas* in the Head of *Jove*.⁵⁸
 When *Memnon*, *Artaxerxes*, and their Friends,
 Shall, in Obedience to the Holy Rites,
 To-morrow at the Altars^c bow unarm'd,
Orchanes with a Party of the Guards, **250**
 Who in my Palace shall this Night be plac'd,
 May at that private Door which opens into
 The Temple, rush at once, and seize 'em all.
 The Heads once safe, the mean and heartless Crowd
 With Ease may be disperst.

Mag. What you propose **255**
 Wears a successful Face, were it as innocent:
 An Act of such outrageous Prophanation,
 May shock the Thoughts even of our closest Friends,
 And make 'em start from an abhorr'd Alliance,
 That draws the Vengeance of the Gods upon 'em. **260**

Mirz. Art thou the first to start a Doubt like that?
 Art thou? who dost inspire their Oracles,
 And teach 'em to deceive the easie Crowd
 In doubtful Phrase, afraid of thy own Gods?
 In every change they were on thy side still, **265**
 And sure they will not leave thee now for Trifles.
 The Gods shall certainly befriend our Cause,
 At least not be our Foes; nor will they leave
 Their happy Seats, where free from Care and Pain,
 Blest in themselves alone, of Man regardless, **270**
 They loll serene in everlasting Ease,
 To mind the trivial Business of our World.

Mag. But more I fear the Superstitious Vulgar,
 Who tho' unknowing what Religion means,
 Yet nothing moves 'em more than Zealous Rage **275**
 For its Defence, when they believe it violated.

Mirz. I was to blame to tax the Priest with Scruples,
Or think his Care of Interest was his Conscience. [*Aside.*
My Caution shall obviate all thy Fears;
We will give out that they themselves design'd 280
To fire the Temple, and then kill the King.
No matter tho' it seem not very probable;
More monstrous Tales have oft amus'd the Vulgar.

Mag. I yield to your Direction, and to strengthen
The Enterprize, will secretly dispose 285
A Party of my own within the Temple,
To join with yours.

Mirz. It joys my Heart to think
That I shall glut my Vengeance on this *Memnon*:
That I shall see him strive in vain, and curse
The happy Fraud that caught him. Like a Lyon, 290
Who long had reign'd the Terror of the Woods,
And dar'd the boldest Huntsmen to the Combat;
Till catcht at length within some hidden Snare,
With foaming Jaws he bites the Toils that hold him,
And roars and rowls his fiery Eyes in vain; 295
While the surrounding Swains at pleasure wound him,
And make his Death their Sport.
Thus Wit still gets the Mastery o'er Courage.
Long time unmatch'd in War the Hero shon,
And mighty Fame in Fields of Battle won; 300
Till one fine Project of the Statesman's Brain
Bereaves him of the Spoils his Arms did gain,
And renders all his boasted Prowess vain.

}

[*Exeunt.*

ACT III. SCENE I.

SCENE A Garden^a belonging to Mirza's Palace.

Cleone is discover'd lying on a Bank of Flowers,
Beliza attending.^b

SONG, by B. Stote, *Esq.*⁵⁹

UPON a shady Bank repos'd,
Philanthe, amorous, young, and fair,

*Sighing to the Groves, disclos'd
The Story of her Care.*

*The Vocal Groves give some Relief, 5
While they her Notes return,
The Waters murmur o'er her Grief,
And Eccho seems to mourn.*

*A Swain that heard the Nymph complain,
In pity of the Fair; 10
Thus kindly strove to cure her Pain,
And Ease her Mind of Care.*

*'Tis just that Love should give you Rest,
From Love your Torments came;
Take that warm Cordial to your Breast, 15
And meet a kinder Flame.*

*How wretched must the Woman prove,
Beware, fair Nymph, beware,
Whose Folly scorns another's Love,
And courts her own Despair: 20*

*Cleo. Oh Love! Thou Bane of an unhappy Maid!
Still art thou busie at my panting Heart?
Still dost thou melt my Soul with thy soft Images,
And make my Ruin pleasing? Fondly I try
By Gales of Sighs and Floods of streaming Tears, 25
To vent my Sorrows, and assuage my Passions.
Still fresh Supplies renew th'exhausted Stores.
Love reigns my Tyrant,⁶⁰ to himself alone
He vindicates the Empire of my Breast,
And banishes all Thoughts of Joy for ever. 30*

*Bel. Why are you still thus cruel to your self?
Why do you feed and cherish the Disease,
That preys on your dear Life? How can you hope
To find a Cure for Love in Solitude?
Why rather chuse you not to shine at Court? 35
And in a thousand gay Diversions there,
To lose the Memory of this wretched Passion?*

*Cleo. Alas! Beliza, thou hast never known
The fatal Power of a resistless Love;*

Like that avenging Guilt that haunts the Impious, 40
 In vain we hope by flying to avoid it;
 In Courts and Temples it pursues us still,
 And in the loudest Clamours will be heard:
 It grows a Part of us, lives in our Blood,
 And every beating Pulse proclaims its Force. 45
 Oh! think not then that I can shun my self;
 The Grave can only hide me from my Sorrows.

Bel. Allow me then at least to share your Griefs;
 Companions in Misfortunes make 'em less;
 And I could suffer much to make you easie. 50

Cleo. Sit by me, gentle Maid, and while I tell
 A wretched Tale of unregarded Love,
 If thou, in kind Compassion of my Woes,
 Shalt sigh or shed a Tear for my mishap,
 My grateful Eyes shall pay it back with interest. 55
 Help me to rail at my too easie Heart,
 That rashly entertain'd this fatal Guest:
 And you, my Eyes! why were you still impatient
 Of any other sight but *Artaxerxes*?
 Why did you make my Woman's Heart acquainted 60
 With all the thousand Graces and Perfections,
 That dress the lovely Hero up for Conquest?

Bel. Had you oppos'd this Passion in its Infancy,
 'Ere time had given it Strength, it might have dy'd.

Cle. That was the fatal Error that undid me: 65
 My Virgin Thoughts, and unexperienc'd Innocence
 Found not the Danger 'till it was too late.
 And tho' when first I saw the charming Prince,
 I felt a pleasing motion at my Heart,
 Short breathing Sighs heav'd in my panting Breast, 70
 The mounting Blood flusht in my glowing Face,
 And dy'd my Cheeks with more than usual Blushes,
 I thought him sure the wonder of his kind,
 And wisht my Fate had given me such a Brother,
 Yet knew not that I lov'd; but thought that all 75
 Like me, beheld and blest him for his Excellence.

Bel. Sure never hopeless Maid was curst before
 With such a wretched Passion; all the Gods

Join to oppose your Happiness; 'tis said
This Day the Prince shall wed the fair *Amestris*. 80

Cleo. No, my *Beliza*, I have never known
The pleasing Thoughts of Hope: Certain Despair
Was born at once, and with my Love encreas'd.

Bel. Think you the Prince has e'er perceiv'd your thought?

Cleo. Forbid it all ye chaster Powers, that favour 85
The Modesty and Innocence of Maids!
No, till my Death, no other Breast but thine
Shall e'er participate⁶¹ the fatal Secret
O could I think that he had ever known
My hidden flame, Shame and Confusion 90
Would force my Virgin Soul to leave her Mansion,
And certain Death ensue.
Thou namest the fair *Amestris*, didst thou not?

Bel. Madam, I did.

Cleo. I envy not her Happiness;
Tho' sure few of our Sex are blest like her 95
In such a Godlike Lord.
Would I had been a Man!
With honour then I might have sought his Friendship.
Perhaps from long experience of my Faith,
He might have lov'd me better than the rest. 100
Amidst the Dangers of the horrid War,
Still had I been the nearest to his side;
In Courts and Triumphs^B still had shar'd his Joys,
Or when the sportful Chace had call'd us forth,
Together had we cheer'd our foaming Steeds, 105
Together prest⁶² the Savage o'er the Plain,
And when o'er-labour'd with the pleasing toil,
Stretcht on the verdant Soil had slept together.
But whither does my roving Fancy wander?
These are the sick Dreams of fantastick Love. 110
So in a Calenture,⁶³ the Sea Man fancies
Green Fields and Flow'ry Meadows on the Ocean,
'Till leaping in, the Wretch is lost for ever.

Bel. Try but the common Remedies of Love,
And let a second Flame⁶⁴ expel the first. 115

Cleo. Impossible; as well as thou may'st imagine,
When thou complain'st of Heat at scorching Noon,
Another Sun shall rise to shine more kindly.
Believe me, my *Beliza*, I am grown
So fond of the Delusion that has charm'd me, **120**
I hate the officious Hand that offers cure.

Bel. Madam, Prince *Artaban*.

Cleo. My cruel Stars!
Do you^e then envy me my very Solitude?
But Death, the Wretches only Remedy,
Shall hide me from your hated Light for ever. **125**

Enter Artaban.

Artab. Ah! Lovely Mourner! still, still wilt thou blast
My eager Love with unauspicious Tears?
When at thy Feet I kneel, and sue for pity,
Or justly of thy cold Regards complain,
Still wilt thou only answer me with Sighs? **130**

Cleo. Alas! my Lord, what Answer can I give?
If still I entertain you with my Grief,
Pity the Temper of a wretched Maid,
By Nature sad, and born the Child of Sorrow.
In vain you ask for Happiness from me, **135**
Who want it for my self.

Art. Can blooming Youth,
And Virgin Innocence, that knows not Guilt,
Know any Cause for Grief?

Cleo. Do but survey
The miserable State of Human kind,
Where Wretches are the general Encrease, **140**
And tell me if there be not Cause for Grief.

Artab. Such Thoughts as these, my fair Philosopher,
Inhabit wrinkled Cheeks, and hollow Eyes,
The marks which Years set on the wither'd Sage;
The gentle Goddess Nature wisely has **145**
Allotted other Cares for Youth and Beauty.
The God of Love stands ready with his Torch⁶⁵

To light it at thy Eyes, but still in vain,
For 'ere the Flame can catch 'tis drown'd in Tears.

Cleo. Oh! name not Love, the worst of all Misfortunes, **150**
The common Ruin of my easie Sex;
Which I have sworn for ever to avoid,
In Memory of all those hapless Maids,
That Love has plung'd in unexampled Woes.

Artab. Forbear to argue, with that Angel Face, **155**
Against the Passion thou wer't form'd to raise.
Alas! thy frozen Heart has only known
Love in Reverse; not tasted of its Joys,
The Wishes, soft Desires, and pleasing Pains,
That centre all in most extatick Bliss. **160**
Oh, lovely Maid, mis-spend no more that Treasure
Of Youth and Charms, which lavish Nature gives;
The *Paphian* Goddess⁶⁶ frowns at thy Delay;
By her fair self, and by her Son⁶⁷ she swears,
Thy Beauties are devoted to her Service. **165**
Now, now^d she shoots her fires into my Breast,
She urges my Desires, and bids me seize thee, [*Taking her Hand and kissing it.*
And bear thee as a Victim to her Altar;
Then offer up ten thousand thousand Joys,
As an amends for all thy former Coldness. **170**

Cleo. Forbear, my Lord; or I must swear to fly
For ever from your Sight.

Artab. Why dost thou frown?
And damp the rising Joy within my Breast?
Art thou resolv'd to force thy gentle Nature,
Compassionate to all the World beside, **175**
And only to me cruel? Shall my Vows,
Thy Father's Intercession all be vain?

Cleo. Why do you urge my Father's fatal Power,
To curse you with a sad unlucky Bride?
Cast round your Eyes on our gay Eastern Courts, **180**
Where smiling Beauties, born to better Fates,
Give Joy to the Beholders.
There bless some happy Princess with your Vows;
And leave the poor *Cleone* to her Sorrows.

Artab. What Queens are those, of most celestial Form **185**
 Whose Charms can drive thy Image from my Heart?
 Oh were they cast in Nature's fairest Mold,
 Brighter than *Cynthia*'s shining train of Stars,⁶⁸
 Kind as the softest she that ever claspt
 Her Lover, when the Bridal Night was past; **190**
 I swear I would prefer thee, O *Cleone*,
 With all thy Scorn and cold Indifference,
 Would chuse to languish and to die for thee,
 Much rather than be blest, and live for them.

Cleo. Oh Prince, it is too much; nor am I worthy **195**
 The Honour of your Passion, since 'tis fixt
 By certain and unalterable Fate,
 That I can never yield you a Return:
 My Thoughts are all to chaste *Diana* vow'd,⁶⁹
 And I have sworn to die her Virgin Votary. **200**

Artab. Impossible! thou canst not give away
 Mine and thy Father's Right, even to the Gods:
Diana will disown the unjust Donation,
 Nor favour such an Injury to Love.
 To every Power Divine I will appeal, **205**
 Nor shall thy Beauty bribe 'em to be partial:
 Their Altars now expect us; Come, fair Saint,
 And if thou wilt abide their righteous Doom,⁷⁰
 Their Justice must decree my Happiness,
 Reward my Sufferings, and my Flame approve, **210**
 For they themselves have felt the Pow'r of Love. [*Exe.*

SCENE II. *The Temple of the Sun.*

Enter Artaxerxes, Amestris, and Attendants.

Art. 'Tis done! 'tis done! oh let me find some way
 To tell the mighty Joy that fills my Breast,
 Lest I grow mad with height of furious Bliss.
 The holy Priest has ty'd the sacred Knot,
 And my *Amestris* now is all my own. **5**
 Oh thou soft Charmer! thou excelling Sweetness!
 Why art thou not transported all like me?
 I swear thou dost not love thy *Artaxerxes*,
 If thou art calm in this Excess of Happiness. **10**

Amest. Alas! my Lord! my panting Heart yet trembles
In vast Suspence between unruly Joys
And chilling Fears; somewhat methinks there is
That checks my Soul, and says I was too bold,
To quit the Pleasures of my Virgin state, **15**
To barter 'em for Cares and anxious Love.

Artax. These are the Fears which wait on every Bride,
And only serve for Preludes to her Joys;
Short sighs, and all those motions of thy Heart,
Are Nature's call, and kindle warm Desires; **20**
Soon as the friendly Goddess of the Night⁷¹
Shall draw her vail of Darkness o'er thy Blushes,
These little cold unnecessary Doubts
Shall fly the Circle of my folding Arms:
And when I press thee trembling to my Bosom, **25**
Thou shalt confess (if there be room for Words,
Or ev'n for Thoughts) that all those Thoughts are Bliss.

Amest. Yet surely mine are more than common Fears;
For oh! my Prince, when my foreboding Heart
Surveys the uncertain State of human Joys, **30**
How secretly the Malice of our Fate
Unseen pursues, and often blasts our Happiness
In full Security; I justly dread,
Lest Death or Parting, or some unseen Accident,
Much worse, if possible, than each of these, **35**
Should curse us more than ever we were blest.

Artax. Doubt not the Gods, my Fair! whose righteous Power
Still favour and protect our vertuous Loves.
If still thou apprehend'st approaching Danger,
Let us make haste, and snatch th'uncertain Joy, **40**
While Fate is in our power.
Now let us start, and give a loose⁷² to Love,
Feast ev'ry Sense with most luxurious Pleasure,
Improve⁷³ our Minutes, make 'em more than Years,
Than Ages, and ev'n live the Life of Gods; **45**
If after this, Death or ill Fortunes comes,
It cannot injure us, since we already
Have liv'd, and been beforehand with our Fate.

Amest. Oh let me ease at once my tender Heart,
And tell my dearest Lord my worst of Fears: **50**

There is an Ill which more than Death I dread;
 Should you, by time and long fruition sated,
 Grow faithless, and forget the lost *Amestris*;
 Forget that everlasting Truth you vow'd,
 Tho' sure I shou'd not publickly complain **55**
 Nor to the Gods accuse my perjur'd Prince,
 Yet my soft Soul would sink beneath the weight.
 I should grow mad, and curse my very Being,
 And wish I ne'er had been, or not been lov'd.

Artax. Dost thou? — when every happier Star shines for us, **60**
 And with propitious Influence gilds our fortune,
 Dost thou invent fantastick Forms of Danger,
 And fright thy Soul with things that are impossible?
 Now by the Potent God of Love, I swear
 I will have ample Vengeance for thy Doubts. **65**
 My soft complaining Fair, shalt thou not pay me,
 In Joys too fierce for Thought, for these Suspicions?
 The bands which hold our Love are knit by Fate,
 Nor shall decaying Time or Nature loose 'em.
 Beyond the limits of the silent Grave **70**
 Love shall survive, immortal as our Beings;
 And when at once we climb yon azure Skies,
 We will be shown to all the blest above,
 For the most constant Pair that e'er deserv'd
 To mingle with their Stars.

Amest. 'Tis true! 'tis true! **75**
 Nor ought I to suspect thee, O my Hero!
 The Gods have form'd thee for the nearest Pattern
 Of their own Excellence and perfect Truth.
 Oh let me sink upon thy gentle Bosom,
 And blushing tell how greatly I am blest. **80**
 Forgive me, Modesty, if here I vow
 That all the Pleasures of my Virgin State
 Were poor and trifling to the present Rapture.
 A gentle warmth invades my glowing Breast,
 And while I fondly gaze upon thy Face, **85**
 Ev'n Thought is lost in exquisite Delight.

Artax. Oh thou delicious perfect Angel Woman!
 Thou art too much for mortal Sense to bear:
 The Vernal bloom and fragrancy of Spices
 Wafted by gentle Winds, are not like thee. **90**

From thee, as from the *Cyprian* Queen of Love,⁷⁴
 Ambrosial Odours flow, my every Faculty
 Is charm'd by thee, and drinks Immortal Pleasure.
 The glorious God of Day fly swiftly forward,
 And to thy Sister's Rule⁷⁵ resign the World: **95**
 Yet haste to rise again, but let the Night
 Long bless me with her stay; that thy return
 At Morn may find me happiest of my kind.

Enter Memnon.

My Father! is there an Increase of Joy?
 What can ye give, ye Gods, to make it more? **100**

Mem. Ye Blessings of my Age: whom when I view,
 The Memory of former Woes is lost.
 Oh Prince! Well has this glorious Day repay'd
 My Youth and Blood spent in *Arsaces* Service.
 Nor, had the Gods indulg'd my vainest Wishes, **105**
 Durst I have askt for such a Son as you are.
 But I am roughly bred, in Words unknowing,
 Nor can I phrase my Speech in apt^a Expression,
 To tell how much I love and honour you.
 Might I but live to fight one Battel for you, **110**
 Tho' with my Life I bought the Victory,
 Tho' my old batter'd Trunk were hew'd to pieces,
 And scatter'd o'er the Field, yet should I bless
 My Fate, and think my Years wound up with Honour.

Art. Doubt not, my noble Father, but even yet **115**
 A large remain⁷⁶ of Glory is behind.
 When civil Discord shall be reconcil'd,
 And all the Noise of Faction husht to Peace,
 Rough *Greece*, alike in Arts and Arms severe,
 No more shall brand the *Persian* Name with Softness,⁷⁷ **120**
Athens and *Sparta* wondring shall behold us,
 Strict in our Discipline, undaunted, patient
 Of Wars stern toil, and dread our hostile Vertue.
 Those stubborn Commonwealths, that proudly dare
 Disdain the glorious Monarchs of the East, **125**
 Shall pay their Homage to the Throne of *Cyrus*,⁷⁸
 And when with Lawrels⁷⁹ cover'd we return,
 My Love shall meet, and smiling bless our Triumph,
 While at her Feet I lay the Scepters of the World.

Mem. Oh glorious Theme! By Heav'n it fires my Age **130**
And kindles Youth again in my cold Veins.

Art. Ha! Mirza and the Queen! retire my Fair:
Ungentle Hate and brawling Rage shall not
Disturb the Peace, to which this happy Day
Is doubly sacred. Forward, to the Altar. **135**

[*Exeunt Artaxerxes, Amestris, Memnon and Attendants.*]

Enter at the other Door, Queen, Mirza, and Attendants.

Mirz. All are dispos'd, and Fate but waits our Orders
For a deciding Blow.

Qu. Your Caution was
Both wise and faithful, not to trust my Son
Too rashly with a Secret of this Nature.
The Youth, tho' great of Soul, and fond of Glory, **140**
Yet leans to the fantastick Rules of Honour,
Would hesitate at such an Act as this,
Tho' future Empire should depend upon it.

Mirz. When time shall add Experience to that Knowledge
With which his early Youth is richly fraught, **145**
He'll be convinc'd that only Fools would lose
A Crown for notionary Principles.
Honour is the unthinking Soldier's Boast,
Whose dull Head cannot reach those finer Arts,
By which Mankind is govern'd. **150**

Qu. And yet it gives a Lustre to the Great,
And makes the Croud adore 'em.

Mirz. Your Son shall reap
The whole Advantage, while we bear the Guilt:
You, Madam, when the sacred Hymns are finish'd,
Must with the Prince retire; our Foes when seiz'd, **155**
Within the Temple may be best secur'd,
And you dispose their Fate.

Qu. The Rites attend us, [*Solemn Musick is heard.*]
This Day my Son is Monarch of the East.

Mirz. Lend us, ye Gods, your Temples but this Day,
You shall be paid with Ages of Devotion, **160**

And after this for ever undisturb'd,
Brood o'er your smoaking Altars.

[*Exeunt Queen, Mirza, and Attendants.*]

SCENE III.^c

Scene opening shews the Altar of the Sun, Magas and several other Priests attending. Solemn Musick is heard; then Enter on one side Memnon, Artaxerxes, Amestris, and Attendants, on the other side the Queen, Mirza, Artaban[,] Cleone, Cleanthes, and Attendants; they all bow towards the Altar, and then range themselves on each side of the Stage, while the following Hymn is perform'd in Parts, and Chorus by the Priests.

HYMN to the Sun, by W. Shippen, Esq;⁸⁰

*HAIL Light, that doubly glads our Sphere,
Glory and Triumph of the Year!
Hail Festival for ever blest,
By the adoring ravisht East!*

*Hail Mithras,⁸¹ mighty Deity! 5
For Fire and Air, and Earth and Sea,
From thee their Origin derive,
Motion and Form from thee receive.*

*When Matter yet unacted lay,
No sooner thou infus'dst thy Ray, 10
But the dull Mass its Power obey'd,
But an harmonious World was made.*

*Which still, when thou withdraw'st thy Beams,^a
An undistinguish'd Chaos seems;
For what are Objects without sight? 15
Or Vision when involv'd⁸² in Night?*

*Night is an universal Grave,
Where things but doubtful Beings have,
Till them thy Beams illuminate,
And as it were again create. 20*

Chorus, &c.

*Hail Source of immaterial Fire,
That ne'er begun can ne'er expire,*

*Whose Orb, with streaming Glories fraught,
Dazles the ken of human Thought!*

All the dependant Spheres above 25
By thy Direction shine and move.
All Purer Beings here below
From thy immediate Essence flow.

What is the Soul of Man but Light,
Drawn down from thy transcendent height? 30
What but an Intellectual Beam?
A Spark of thy immortal Flame?

For as thou rulest with gladsome Rays
The greater World, so this the less;
And like thy own diffusive Soul, 35
Shoots Life and Vigour thro' the whole.

Since then from thee at first it came,
To thee, tho' clogg'd, it points its flame,
And conscious of superiour Birth,
Despises this unkindred Earth. 40

Chorus, &c.

Hail Orosma^d,⁸³ Pow'r Divine!
Permit us to approach thy Shrine,
Permit thy Votaries to raise
Their grateful Voices to thy Praise.

Thou art the Father of our Kings, 45
The Stem whence their high Lineage^b springs,
The Sov'reign Lord that does maintain
Their uncontroul'd and boundless Reign.

O then assist thy drooping Son,
Who long has grac'd our Persian Throne! 50
O may he yet extend his Sway!
We yet Arsaces Rule obey!

Let thy Vitality^c impart
New Spirits to his fainting Heart;
Let him like thee, from whom he sprung, 55
Be ever Active, ever Young.

Chorus, &c.

When the Musick is ended, Memnon, Artaxerxes, &c. Queen, Artaban, &c, go off as they enter 'd, severally; only Mirza comes forward, and the Scene⁸⁴ shuts; he looks after Amestris going out, and then speaks.

Mirz. What means this foreign warmth within my Breast?

Is this a time for any thought but Vengeance?

That fatal Beauty dazles my weak Sense,

And blasts the Resolution of my Soul: **60**

My Eyes, in contradiction to my Purpose,

Still bent to her, and drunk the Poyson in;

While I stood stupid in suspence of Thought.

And now like Oyl my flaming Spirits blaze;

My Arteries, my Heart, my Brain is scorch'd, **65**

And I am all one Fury. Feeble *Mirza*!

Can'st thou give way to dotage, and become

The jest of Fools? No! 'tis impossible:

Revenge shall rouse, and with her Iron Whips

Lash forth this lazy Ague from my Blood, **70**

This Malady of Girls. Remember Statesman,

Thy Fate and future Fortunes now are forming,

And summon all thy Counsels to their Aid,

Ev'n thy whole Soul. It wo't not be; *Amestris*

Still rises uppermost in all my Thoughts, **75**

The Master-piece of Nature. The Boy God⁸⁵

Laughs at my Rage, and triumphs^d o'er my Folly.

Ha! by the Gods 'tis doing! Now my Stars

Be kind, and make me Master of my wish at once.

[A tumultuous Noise is heard.]

Enter Magas.

But see the Priest! Why dost thou stare and tremble? **80**

Have we succeeded, say? and ease my Fears.

Mag. My Soul is pierc'd with Horror! Every God

Seems from his Shrine to threaten us with Vengeance.

The Temple reels, and all its pond'rous Roof

Nods at the Prophanation.

Mirz. Base and fearful! **85**

How can thy wretched Soul conceive such Monsters?

Can'st thou who would'st be great be Superstitious?
But 'tis the Cowards Vice. Say; are our Enemies secur'd?

Mag. They are; the Prince, Old *Memnon* and his Daughter
Are in *Orchane's* Hands; only *Tigranes* 90
With some of lesser Note are fled.

Mirz. No matter.
These are the Soul, the rest a lifeless Mass
Not worth our Apprehension.

Mag. Will you stay,
To meet the furious Thunder of their Rage?

Mirz. I will; thou may'st retire and summon back 95
Thy scatter'd Spirits; Let not the Crowd see [*Exit Mag.*
Thy Fears, 'twill make thee^f Vile and Cheap among 'em.

Enter Artaxerxes, Memnon, and Amestris Prisoners, Orchanes and Guards.

Art. Slave! Villain! Answer, say how hast thou dar'd
To do this Insolence? —

Orch. I know my Orders
Which from the Queen my Mistress I receiv'd, 100
Who will avow her own Authority.

Art. Ha! from the Queen! She durst not! 'tis impossible!
'Tis Sacrilege! 'tis Treason! 'tis Damnation.
Am I not *Artaxerxes*? Born to Empire,
The next Degree to Gods. Oh thou bright Sun! 105
That roul'st above, the Object of our Worship;
Can'st thou behold and not avenge thy Race?
Thy injur'd Race? If I could ought admit
Unworthy of thy great Original,
Let me be doom'd to fall this Villain's Slave; 110
If not — Why am I made the Scorn of Wretches?
So much below me that they hardly share
The common Privilege of Kind; but are
As Beasts to Men —

Mem. See where the Master Villain stands! unmov'd 115
And harden'd in Impiety, he laughs

At the fictitious Justice of the Gods,
 And thinks their Thunder has not Wings to reach him;
 But know the Joy thy Triumph brings is short.
 My Fate (if the Gods govern) or at least **120**
 My Mind's beyond thy reach, and scorns thy Malice.

Mirz. Dull valiant Fool, thy Ruin is the least
 The most ignoble Triumph of my Wit.
Cleander's Blood asks for substantial Vengeance,
 And when the Thought that labours in my Breast **125**
 Appears in Action, thou shalt know the Cause
 Why I remain to view thy hated Face,
 That blasts me with its Presence; thou shalt know it
 And curse thy self, curse the ill omen'd Day
 That gave thee Birth; renouncing all the Gods, **130**
 Thy self of them renounc'd, shalt sink to Hell
 In bitterest Pangs, and mingle with the Furies.

Mem. Unhallow'd Dog, thou ly'st! the utmost Force
 Of all thy study'd Malice cannot move me.^s
 And if the Gods, in Tryal of my Virtue, **135**
 Can yield my Life up to thy Hangman's Mercy,
 I'll shew thee with what ease the Brave and Honest
 Can put off Life; till thou shalt damn thy Arts,
 Thy wretched Arts, and Impotence of Malice.

Mirz. Rest well assur'd, thou shalt have Cause to try **140**
 The Philosophick Force of passive Virtue.

Art. Oh Death to Greatness! Can we fall so low
 To be the slavish Objects of his Mirth?
 Shall my just Rage and violated Honour
 Play the Buffoon and Minister to laughter? **145**
 Down, down my swelling Heart, hide thy Resentments,
 Nor prostitute the ruffled Majesty
 Of injur'd Princes to the gazing Crowd:
 My Face shall learn to cover the Emotion
 My wounded Soul endures. Ha! my *Amestris*? **150**
 My Love! my Royal Bride! the spoiler Grief
 Defaces every Feature, like the Deluge
 That ras'd the Beauties of the first Creation;⁸⁶
 I cannot bear it; Villains give me way!

[He breaks from the Guard, and catches hold of Amestris.]

Oh let me hold thee in my throbbing Bosom, **155**
 And strive to hide thy Sorrows from my sight:
 I cannot see thy Griefs; and yet I want
 The Power to bring Relief.

Ames. Ah! No my Prince!
 There are no Remedies for Ills like ours;
 My helpless Sex by nature stands expos'd **160**
 To all the Wrongs and Injuries of Fortune;
 Defenceless in my self, you were my Refuge,
 You are my Lord; to whom should I complain,
 Since you cannot redress me? were you not
 The Honour, Joy, and Safety of *Amestris*? **165**
 For you alone I liv'd, with you alone
 I could be happy: oh my *Artaxerxes*!
 One Influence guides our consenting Stars,
 And still together are we blest or curst.

Mirz. With a malignant Joy my Ears drink in **170**
 Her^h each harmonious Accent; every Glance
 Goes to my Heart, and stirs alternate Motions
 Of Heat and Cold: a lazie Pleasure now
 Thrills all my Veins, anon Desire grows Hot,
 And my old Sinews shrink before the Flame. [*Aside.* **175**

Artax. Go on! and charm me with thy Angel's Voice,
 Sooth and assuage the Fury in my Breast,
 That urges me to unbecoming Passion;
 My Rage grows cool amidst thy soft Complaining,
 And though thou talk'st of Woes, of Death and Ruin, **180**
 'Tis Heaven to hear thee.

Ames. Since this is all our wretched Consolation,
 Let us indulge our Grief, till by long use,
 It grows Habitual and we lose the Pain.
 Here, on the marble Pavement will we sit, **185**
 Thy Head upon my Breast; and if remembrance
 Of cruel Wrongs shall vex thy noble Heart,
 The Murmur of my Sighs shall charm the Tumult,
 And Fate shall find us calm; nor will the Gods,
 Who here inhabit and behold our Sufferings, **190**
 Delay to end our Woes in Immortality.

Artax. Ha! say'st thou? Gods? Yes certain there are Gods
 To whom my Youth with Rev'rence still has bow'd,

Whose Care and Providence are Virtue's Guard:
Think then, my Fair, they have not made us great, **195**
And like themselves, for miserable ends.

Mirz. Gods might behold her and forget their Wisdom; [*Aside.*
But I delay too long! *Orchanes* lend thy Ear.

[*Mirz whispers Orch. and Ex.*

Mem. My Children! you were still my Joy and Happiness,
Why am I made your Curse? this hated Head, **200**
To Death devoted, has involv'd your Innocence
In my Destruction. [*Guards lay hold on Artax. and Amestris.*

Ames. Alas, my Father! —

Artax. Barbarous Dogs! What mean you?

Orch. Convey the Lady to Lord *Mirza's* Palace:
'Tis the Queen's Will she shall be there confin'd. **205**

Artax. Thou can'st not mean so damn'd a Villany!
Thou dar'st not! shalt not part us! Fate cannot do it!

Mem. Curse Old Age, why have I liv'd to see this?

Orch. Force 'em asunder.

Art. Hew off my Limbs, ye Dogs! I will not lose 'em — **210**
Oh Devils! Death and Furies! my Wife! my lov'd *Amestris* —

Ames. My Lord! my Husband —

[*Orchanes and one Party of the Guards force Artaxerxes and Memnon off one way, and the other Party bears Amestris another.*

Re enter Mirza.

Mirz. This was most noble Mischief! it stung home,
'Twas Luxury of Vengeance — 'twas not ill
To keep aloof; these boisterous Beasts have Paws, **215**
And might have scratcht: The Wise should not allow
A possibility to Fortunes Malice.
Now to the rest; this Prince! this Husband! dies:
To-Morrow's dawn brings his and *Memnon's* Fate.
This Night let 'em despair, and Bann,⁸⁷ and Rage, **220**

And to the wooden Deities within
 Tell frantick Tales; my Hours shall pass more pleasingly,
 If Love (which yet I know not) can give Pleasure:
 Love! What is Love? The Passion of a Boy,
 That spends his time in Laziness and Sonnets: **225**
 Lust is the Appetite of Man; and shall
 Be sated, till it loath the cloying Banquet.
 The Wise are priviledg'd by human frailty
 To taste these Pleasures, but not dwell upon 'em;
 They marr and dull the Faculty of thinking. **230**
 One Night I safely may indulge in Riot,
 'Tis Politick Lewdness, and assists my Vengeance;
 I will grow young, and surfeit on her Charms,
 Her luscious Sweets; then rising from her Arms,
 The nauseous, Momentary Joy forget, **235**
 And be my self again; again, be Wise and Great. [*Exit.*ⁱ

ACT IV. SCENE I.

SCENE *the Palace.*^a

Enter Artaban and Cleanthes.

Art. TIS Base and Impious! Where are the Ties
 Shall keep Mankind in Order, if Religion
 And publick Faith be violated? 'Tis an Injury
 That beards⁸⁸ both Gods and Men; and dares their Justice.

Clea. The fearful Crowd already take th' Alarm,^b **5**
 Break off their solemn Sports, their Songs and Dances,
 And wildly in tumultuous Consort join;
 Mischief and Danger sits in every Face,
 And while they dread the Anger of the Gods,
 The Wise, who know th' Effects of popular Fury, **10**
 From them expect the Vengeance which they fear.

Artab. The sacred Power of Majesty, which should
 Forbid, owns and protects the Violence;
 It must not, shall not be; Who steals a Crown
 By Arts like these, wears it unworthily. **15**

Clean. The Queen your Mother, Sir! she will expect
 You should approve that Act her Power has done.

Artab. I'll meet her as I ought, and show myself
Worthy the noble Rivalship of Empire.

Enter the Queen, Mirza and Attendants.

Queen. My Son, I come to joy you of a Crown 20
And Glory certain now; your Fate at length,
Has master'd that Malignant Influence
With which it struggled long: You are a King,
The greatest that our *Eastern* World beholds;
And tho' my widow'd Bed be cause for Grief, 25
Yet for thy Sake, my Son, I joy to say,
Arsaces is no more.

Artab. 'Twere vain and foolish,
To mourn his Death with ceremonious Sorrow;
For tho' he died the greatest of our Race, 30
Yet since decaying Age had sunk him low,
And all the Native Majesty was lost,
'Twas time the Soul should seek for Immortality,
And leave the weary Body to enjoy
In honourable Rest from Care and Sickness: 35
Peace to his Ashes, and Eternal Fame
Dwell with his Memory, while we who Live
Look back with Emulation on his Greatness,
And with laborious Steps strive to ascend
That Height where once he sat.

Qu. Thou hast already 40
Attain'd the lofty Summit of his Glory;
His Throne expects thee but to sit and fill it.

Artab. No, Madam; when the Gods chuse worthy Subjects
On whom to place such Greatness, they surround
The Glorious Prize with Toil and thorny Danger, 45
And bid the Man who would be great, dare greatly.
Be it for dull Elder Brothers to possess
Without deserving; Mine's a Nobler Claim;
Nor will I taste the Godlike Joys of Power,
Till Men and Gods with Justice shall confess 50
'Tis barely the Reward of what I merit.

Qu. What means my Son?

Artab. To wrestle for a Crown.

Qu. With what fantastick Shadow wouldst thou strive?
The Haughty Rival of thy Hopes is fallen,
He lives indeed, but 'tis to Grace thy Triumph, **55**
And bow before thee; then be swept away
Like the Remembrance of an idle Dream,
Which tho' of Yesternight, is now forgotten.

Artab. It grieves me much to say, my Royal Mother,
I cannot take a Crown upon these Terms, **60**
Tho' even from your Hands: The Conscious Virtue
That witnesses within my Breast for Glory,
Points me to Greatness by the Paths of Honour,
And urges me to do as a King ought,
That would not wear his Purple as the Gift **65**
Of impious Treachery and base Deceit.

Qu. Amazement turns my Senses! Or I Dream!
For sure thou canst not mean so poor a Folly.
Hast thou been bred in the Wise Arts of Empire?
Been early taught to know the Worth of Power? **70**
And would'st thou lose^e the Golden Opportunity
With which thy Fortune courts thee, for a Notion?
An empty sound of Virtue? A dry Maxim
Which Pedants have devis'd for Boys to canvas?
Can my Son think so meanly? Go, set free **75**
(Since Honour bids) this Lordly Elder Brother
Bow like a Slave before him, wait his Pleasures,
And live dependant^d on his scanty Pension;
He may reward thy servile Loyalty,
And make thee Ruler of some petty Province, **80**
In recompence of Royalty giv'n up.

Artab. No! (Tho' I must confess I would not hold him
Caught in a Villain's Snare, nor do a Murther
Unworthy of a Hang-man) yet to Death
I still defie him as my Mortal Foe; **85**
And since my Father's Fate dissolves that Truce,
To which I stood engag'd; 'tis War again.
Admist the steely Squadrons will I seek
This haughty Brother, by his Friends surrounded
And back'd with all th' Advantage^e of his Birth; **90**
Then bravely prove upon him with my Sword,

He falsely brands me for a bookish Coward,
That Nature's Error only gave him Preference,
Since Fate mean't me the King.

Qu. A Mother's Care is watchful for thy Safety **95**
Else wert thou lost, thou honourable Fool;
Long might'st thou vainly hunt in Bloody Fields
For that Advantage, which thy willing Fortune
Now reaches to thy Hands: In Battles with
Uncertain Wings the wavering Goddess flies, **100**
And oft with partial hand bestows her Favour
On Fools and thick Scull'd Heroes; seize her now
While She is thine, or She is lost for Ever.

Artab. No matter, let her fly; the Eagle Virtue
Shall soar beyond her and command her flight; **105**
Fortune is not my Mistress, but my Slave.
Posterity that reads the Name of *Artaban*
In the Records of Empire, shall not blush
To think I plotted with a Knavish Priest,
The Scandal of his venerable Function, **110**
And mark of the Gods Vengeance, to betray
A Prince my Enemy; as if being Conscious
Of lesser Worth, and of unequal Courage,
I durst not fairly strive with him for Greatness.
Let the abhorr'd and impious Treachery **115**
Obscurely die, unknown to future Ages;
Or if our Shame must be deliver'd down,
By all Kingly Hopes that fire^f my Soul,
It shall not pass without a Brand of Punishment.

Qu. 'Tis wondrous well! Young Man you King it rarely! **120**
You mean to be renown'd for early Justice,
And mark your Ostentacious Love of Virtue
Ev'n in their Bloods, who lift you up to Power;
Perhaps we too, our self must be Arraign'd
Before your puny Bar, and feel your Ax; **125**
'Twill be a Noble Subject for your Praise,
And yield much Matter to declaiming Flatterers.

Artab. You, Madam, are my Mother, Nature blinds me,
And bids me see no Faults in her that bore me;
Those other Slaves that dare —

Qu. May be Immortal, **130**

For ought that thou can'st do to cause their Fate,
Is not thy Power the Creature of my Favour,
Which in precarious wise on me depending,
Exists by my Concurrence to its being?
Mistaken Youth! Whose giddy Brain, Ambition **135**
Has like the Fume of drunken Vapours turn'd;
Think'st thou that I, whose Soul was form'd for Sway,
Would lay the Golden Reins of Empire down?
Or trust 'em to the guidance of a Boy?
Who shall dispose of me, or those that serve me, **140**
According to the Dictates of Old Morals,
His bearded Tutor gleans from musty Authors.

Artab. Nay then 'tis time I should Assert my self;
And tho' you gave me Birth, yet from the Gods
(Who made my Father be as he was, Royal, **145**
And stamp't the Mark of Greatness on my Soul)
I claim my Right to Empire; may I fall
Vile and forgotten, if I Ever own
Any Superior Being but those Gods.

Qu. Thou rav'st! and hast forgot me.

Artab. No, you are **150**
My Mother, and a Woman, form'd to Obey;
On that Condition all your Sexes Privileges
Are founded; the Creating Hand has mixt
Softness and Beauty in your Composition,
To Charm and bend the Mind of Man Impatient **155**
Of the Ignoble Pleasure; you were made for
The Weakness and Necessities of Nature.
Ill are your feeble Souls for Greatness suited,
Desire of Government is monstrous in you.

Qu. Thou mighty Goddess Nature! Dost thou hear **160**
This Rebel Son! This insolent Upbraider!
Still fondly nurst in my indulgent Bosom!
To build whose future Greatness to the Skies,
My Anxious Soul has labour'd more than when
I felt a Mother's Sorrow for his Birth. **165**
Ungrateful Boy! —
Know Fool! that vaunt'st thy self upon thy Manhood,
The greatest he thy rougher kind e'er had,

Must have confest Woman's Superior Wit,
 And own'd our Sexes just Prerogative. **170**
 Did not a Mother's Fondness plead hard for thee,
 Thy Head should pay the Forfeit of thy Insolence;
 For know (Young King!) that I am Fate in *Persia*;
 And Life and Death depend upon my Pleasure.

Art. The World would be well govern'd, should the Gods **175**
 Depute their Providence to Women's Care,
 And trust them with the Fate of Kings and Empires.

Qu. Yet thou art Safe! Away! Nor tempt me farther:
 The Patience ev'n of Gods themselves has Limits,
 Tho' they with long Forbearance view Man's Folly. **180**
 Yet if thou still persist to dare my Power,
 Like them I may be urg'd to loose my Vengeance;
 And tho' thou wert my Creature, strike thee Dead.

Mirz. 'Beseech you Sir, retire; the Queen your Mother
 Labours with wisest Foresight for your Good, **185**
 And is incens'd to see you thwart that Purpose.

Artab. What is the Good of Greatness but the Power?
 Madam, I leave you; my own Innate Virtue
 Arms me against your Rage Unjust and Impotent.
 Wait but the great Success my Soul divines, **190**
 And you will own your little jugling Arts
 Have only serv'd to obstruct a while my Glory,
 And skreen this elder Brother from my Conquest.

[Ex. Artaban and Cleanthes.]

Qu. Some Envious Pow'r above, some Hostile *Demon*,
 Works under-hand against my stronger Genius, **195**
 And counter-mines me with Domesticks^D Jars.
 Malicious Chance! When all abroad was safe,
 To start an unseen Danger from my self!
Mirza! Did'st not thou mark the haughty Boy?
 With what assuming Pride he own'd his daring? **200**
 And claim'd superiority of Power?
 Oh can I live and bear to be Controul'd?
 To share the Pleasure of Supreme Command,
 With him or any one? Oh *Artemisa!*
 Did'st thou distain Subjection to a Husband, **205**
 The Proudest Title of that Tyrant Man,

And canst thou yield t'a Boy? A Son? By Nature
And grateful Duty to Obedience bound?

Mirz. Madam, Let me intreat you, by the Gods,
To calm your just Resentments: Medling Fortune, **210**
(Whose Malice labours to perplex the Wise,)
If not prevented, will unravel all
Those finer Arts, which we with Care have wove.
The Prince, led on by this pernicious Honour,
May set the Pris'ners free; think, if that happen, **215**
To what a shock of Fate we stand expos'd.

Qu. 'Tis true! this foolish Honour ruins all;
Ridiculous Notion! as if Self-Interest
Were not the first and noblest Law of Nature.
Say then wise Lord, and let thy ready Wit, **220**
Still present to it self, avert this Blow.

Mirz. One Method, tho' ungentle, yet remains
To remedy the Fears this Ill produces;
This Instant let a Guard confine the Prince;
'Ere he can gain the Means t'effect that Mischief **225**
He meditates against himself, and us:
To-Morrow, early as the Morning dawns,
The Prisoners all shall Die; that once dispatcht,
This raging Fit of Honour will relax,
And give him leisure to consider coolly **230**
Th' Advantage of his Fortune.

Qu. You have Reason;
And tho' I fear his haughty Temper will
But badly brook Confinement, he must learn
To bear it as he can; perhaps 'twill bend him,
and make his Youth more plyant to my Will. **235**

Mirz. Your Orders cannot be dispatch'd too soon,
Each Minute of the flying Hours is Precious.

Qu. The Eunuch *Bagoas*! let him attend us,
He shall receive Instructions on the Instant.

[*Exuent the Queen and Mirza severally.*]

SCENE II. *Mirza's Palace.*

*Enter Cleone in Man's Habit, with a dark Lanthorn,*⁸⁹ *Beliza^a following.*

Cleo. Ye gentler Powers, who view our Cares with pity,
Lend your Compassion to the poor *Amestris*;
Oh my *Beliza*, was not thy Soul wounded,
To hear (when now we past by her Apartment)
The piercing Accents of her loud Complainings? **5**
By Heaven my aking Heart bleeds for her Sufferings.

Bel. 'Tis sure she feels the bitterest^b Pangs of Woe,
And were not all my Thoughts to you devoted,
Her Grief would deeply sink into my Soul;
Why will you tempt alone Ten thousand Dangers? **10**
Your Father's and the furious Queen's Resentments?
The Cruel Guards? And all those fatal Accidents,
Which in the Horror of this Dreadful Night
Might shake the Resolution of a Man?

Cleo. Prithee no more; thou know'st I am resolv'd, **15**
And all thy kind Advice is urg'd in vain.
Thy fond mistaking Fears present the Danger
More dreadful than it is; this Master-key
Admits me thro' that Passage to the Temple,
By which the Guards who seiz'd the unhappy Prince **20**
This Morning enter'd; that of all the rest
Is only left unguarded, and from thence,
Assisted by the friendly Vail of Night,
We may Conduct him thro' my Father's Palace
In safety to the Street; there undistinguish'd **25**
Amongst the busy discontented Croud,
That swarm in murmuring Heaps, he may retire;
Nor shall my Father or the Queen e'er know
The Pious Fraud my Love was guilty of.

Bel. Yet still I fear—

Cleo. No more! Retire and leave me, **30**
My drooping Heart sits lighter than it's wont,
And cheerfully presages good Success.

Bel. Where shall I wait you?

Cleo. At my own Apartment.

Bel. The mighty Gods protect you.

Cleo. Softly! Retire. [*Exit Beliza.*^c
 What Noise was that? — The Creature of my Fears. **35**
 In vain, fond Maid, would'st thou bely thy Sex,
 Thy Coward Soul confesses thee a Woman,
 A foolish, rash, fond Woman. Where am I going?
 To save my Godlike Hero! Oh my Heart!
 It pants and trembles; sure 'tis Joy, not Fear; **40**
 The Thought has give me Courage; I shall save him,
 That Darling of my Eyes. What if I fail?
 Then Death is in my Reach and ends my Sorrows.

[*Shewing a Dagger.*

Why do'st thou shake, my Hand? and fear to grasp
 This Instrument of Fate? If I succeed, **45**
 Yet *Artaxerxes* will not live for me;
 And my Despair will want thy friendly Aid.
 Death ev'ry way shuts up my gloomy Prospect.
 If then there be that *Lethe* and *Elisium*
 Which Priests and Poets tell, to that dark Stream **50**
 My Soul of Life impatient shall make haste;
 One healing Draught my Quiet shall Restore,
 And Love forgotten ne'er disturb me more. [*Exit.*^d

SCENE III.

A Night^a Scene of the Temple of the Sun.

Enter Artaxerxes and Memnon.

Artax. Still 'tis in vain! This idle Rage is vain!
 And yet, my swelling Passions will have way;
 And rend my labouring Breast till they find vent.
 Was it for this, ye cruel Gods, you made me
 Great like yours selves, and as a King, to be **5**
 Your Sacred Image? Was it but for this?
 To be Cut down, and mangled by vile Hands,
 Like the false Object of mistaken Worship!
 Why rather was I not a peasant Slave?
 Bred from my Birth a Drudge to your Creation, **10**
 And to my destin'd Load inur'd betimes?

Mem. The Malice of our Fate were not Compleat,
 Had we not been by just Degree; to Happiness
 Rais'd, only to be plung'd the deeper down
 In an Abyss of Woes. Early Success 15
 Met and Attended all my youthful Wars;
 And when I rush'd amidst the dreadful Battle,
 The weaker *Genii*⁹⁰ of our *Asian* Monarchs
 Shrunk from the Force of a Superior Fate;
 O'er march'd they fell, and by my Sword were swept 20
 Like common Beings from the glorious Field.
 Then was the Day of joyous Triumph, then
 My Soul was lifted high, ev'n to the Stars.
 But now! What am I now? O damn'd Reverse of Fortune?
 Now when my Age would be indulg'd in Ease, 25
 And Joy in Pleasure of my former Fame,
 Now I am curs'd; held at a Villain's Mercy,
 My Foe's Derision, and the Scorn of Cowards.

Artax. Oh! Torture of my Soul! damn'd racking Thought!
 Am not I too reserv'd for servile Vassalage? 30
 To be the subject of a Boy's Command?
 A Boy by Nature set beneath my Sway?
 And born to be my Slave! shall he triumph?
 And bid me Live or Die? Shall he dispose
 His beardless Visage to a scornful Smile, 35
 And tell me that his Pleasure is my Fate?
 No! my disdainful Soul shall struggle out
 And start at once from its dishonour'd Mansion.

Mem. Oh! Royal Thought! Nor shall they keep Death from us,^b
 Altho' its common Means be not in reach. 40
 Shall my old Soldier's Outside, rough and hardy,
 Scarr'd o'er with many an honourable Mark,
 Be caged for publick Scorn? Shall a Dog tell me
 Thus didst thou once, and now thou art my Slave;
 My Foot shall spurn thee, tread upon thy Neck, 45
 And trample in the Dust thy Silver Hairs?
 Shall I not rather choak? Hold in my Breath?
 Or smear some Wall or Pillar with my Brains?

Artax. Rage or some God shall save us from Dishonour,
 But oh! my Father! Can we take our flight, 50
 Tho' to the Stars, and leave my Love behind?
 Where is she now? Where is my Queen! my Bride!

My Charmer! my *Amestris*!

Mem. Speak not of her.

Artax. Not speak. —

Mem. Nor think of her, if possible.

Artax. Was she not snatch'd, torn from my helpless Arms, 55
 Whilst every God look'd on and saw the Wrong,
 Heard her loud Cries, which vainly strove to rouse
 Their slow unready Vengeance? Was she not
 Forc'd from my panting Bosom (yet I live!)
 Ev'n on our Bridal Day? Then, when our Flames 60
 Were kindly join'd, and made but one Desire;
 Then, when she sigh'd and gaz'd, and blush'd and sigh'd;
 When every Touch, when every Joy grew fiercer,
 And those that were behind were more than Mortal,
 To lose her then! Oh! — 65
 And yet you bid me think of her no more?

Mem. I do; for the bare mention turns my Brain,
 And ev'n now I border upon Madness;
 So dreadful is the very Apprehension
 Of what may be.

Artax. Can we make Thought go back? 70
 Will it not turn again? Cleave to our Breasts?
 And urge Remembrance 'till it sting us home?
 Ha! Now the Ghastly Scene is set before me;
 And as thou said'st it runs me to distraction.
 Behold her Beauties, form'd for Kings to serve, 75
 Held Vile, and treated like an abject Slave!
 Helpless amidst her Cruel Foes she stands;
 Insulting *Artemisa* mocks her Tears,
 And bids her call the Gods and me in vain.

Mem. Would that were all.

Artax. Ha! whither woud'st thou drive me? 80

Mem. Did you like me consider that Dog *Mirza*,
 Early to Hell devoted, and the Furies,
 Born, Nurs'd, and Bred a Villain, you would fear

The worst Effects his Malice could express
On Virtue which he hates, when in his Power. **85**

Artax. What is the worst?

Mem. What my old faulting Tongue
Trembles to utter; Goatish Lust and Rape.

Artax. Ha! Rape! If there are Gods, it is impossible.

Mem. Oh! dreadful Image for a Father's Thought,
To have his only Child, her Sex's boast, **90**
The Joy of Sight and Comfort of his Age,
Dragg'd by a Villain Slave, his ruthless Hand
Wound in her Hair, to some remote dark Cell,
A Scene for Horror fit, there to be blotted
By his foul Lust, 'till Appetite be gorg'd. **95**
Let me grow Savage first, let this old Hand,
That oft has blest her, in her Blood be drench'd,
Let me behold her dead, dead at my foot,
To spare a Father's greater Shame and Sorrow.

Artax. A Father! What's a Father's Plague to mine? **100**
A Husband, and a Lover! If it can be,
If there is such a hoarded Curse in store,
Transfix me now ye Gods, now let your Thunder
Fall on my Head, and stike me to the Centre;
Least if I should survive my ruin'd Honour **105**
And injur'd Love, I should ev'n curse your Godheads,
Run Banning⁹¹ and Blaspheming thro' the World,
And with my Execrations fright your Worshippers
From kneeling at your Altars.

Enter Cleone with a dark Lanthorn and Key.

Cle. This way the Ecchoing Accents seem to come, **110**
Sure 'tis the wretched Prince! Oh can you hear him
And yet refuse to lend your Aid, ye Gods?

Artax. This Gloom of horrid Night suits well my Soul,
Love, Sorrow, Conscious Worth, and Indignation,
Stir mad Confusion in my lab'ring Breast, **115**
And I am all o'er Chaos.

Cleo. Is this, alas!
 The state of *Artaxerxes*, *Persia's* Heir?
 Not one Poor Lamp to chear the dismal Shade
 Of this huge Holy Dungeon? Slaves, Murderers,
 Villains that Crosses wait for,⁹² are not us'd thus. **120**
 I'll shew my self. [*She turns the Light and comes towards Art & Mem.*]

Mem. Ha! whence this Gleam of Light?

Artax. Fate is at Hand, let's haste to bid it welcome,
 It brings an end of Wretchedness.

Cleo. Speak lower.
 I am a Friend; long live Prince *Artaxerxes*.

Art. What Wretch art thou, that hail'st me with a Curse? **125**
 Come from that Cloud⁹³ that muffles up thy Face,
 And if thou hast a Dagger, shew it boldly.
 We wish to die.

Cleo. Think better of my Errand,
 I bring you Blessings, Liberty and Life,
 And come the Minister of happier Fate; [*Turns the Light on her self.* **130**
 Now down my Blood! down to my trembling Heart,
 Nor sparkle in my Visage to betray me. [*Aside.*]

Artax. Ha! as I live, a Boy! a blushing Boy!
 Thou wer't not form'd sure for a Murderer's Office,
 Speak then, and tell me what and whence thou art. **135**

Cleo. Oh! seek not to unvail a trivial Secret,
 Which known imports you not. I am a Youth
 Abandon'd to Misfortunes from my Birth,
 And never knew one Cause to joy in Life,
 But this that puts it in my Pow'r to save **140**
 A Prince like *Artaxerxes*. Ask no more,
 But follow thro' the Mazes that I tread,
 Until you find your Safety.

Artax. Thus forbidding
 Thou giv'st me cause t'Enquire; are then the Guards,
 That when the Day went down, with strickest Watch **145**
 Observ'd the Temple Gates, remov'd or fled?

Cleo. They are not, but with Numbers reinforc'd
Keep every Passage; only one remains
Thro' *Mirza's* Palace, open to your Flight.

Mem. Ha! *Mirza!* there's Damnation in his Name, **150**
Ruin, Deceit, and Treachery attend it;
Can Life, can Liberty or Safety come
From him? or ought that has an Int'rest in him?
Rather, suspect this feigning Boy his Instrument,
To plunge us deeper yet, if possible, **155**
To Misery; perhaps some happy Accident,
Is yet to us unknown, preserves us from
The utmost Malice of his Hate, while here:
This sets his wicked Wit at work to draw us
Forth from this Holy Place; much better be **160**
The Pris'ners of the Gods, than wear his Fetters.

Cleo. Unfortunate Suspicion! What shall I say
To urge 'em to be safe, and yet preserve
My wretched self unknown? [*Aside.*]

Artax. Surely that Face
Was not design'd to hide dissembled Malice; **165**
Say Youth, art thou of *Mirza's* House; (as sure thou must,
If thou pretend'st to lead us that way forth;)
And can'st thou be a Friend to *Artaxerxes*?
Whom that fell Dog, that Minister of Devils,
With most opprobrious Injuries has loaded. **170**

Cleo. Tho' I am his, yet sure I never shar'd
His Hate. Shall I confess and own my Shame?
Oh Heavens! — [*Aside.*]

Mem. Mark th'unready Traitor stammers;
Half-bred and of the Mungrel Strain of Mischief,
He has not Art enough to hide the Cheat, **175**
His deep designing Lord had better plotted.
Away! thinks he so poorly of our Wit,
To gull us with a Novice? If our Fate
Has given us up, and mark'd us for Destruction,
Tell him, we are resolv'd to meet it here. **180**

Cleo. Yet hear me Prince, since you suspect me sent
By *Mirza*, to ensnare you, know I serve,

Oh Gods! to what am I reduc'd! (*Aside*) — his Daughter.
 Some God compassionate of your Woes has stirr'd
 A Woman's Pity, in her softer Breast: **185**
 And 'tis from her I come to give your Liberty.
 I beg you to believe me, [*She weeps.*]

Artax. See, he weeps!

Mem. The waiting Tears stood ready for Command,
 And now they flow to varnish the false Tale.

Artax. His Daughter, say'st thou? I have seen the Maid. **190**
 Dost thou serve her? And could she send thee to me?
 'Tis an unlikely Riddle.

Mem. Perhaps 'tis meant,
 That she who shares his poisonous Blood, shall share
 The Pleasure of his Vengeance; and inure
 Her Woman's^c Hands and Eyes to Death and Mischief **195**
 But thou her Instrument, be gone and say,
 The Fate of Princes is not Sport for Girls.

Cleo. Some envious Power blasts my pious Purpose,
 And nought but Death remains; O that by that
 I might perswade him to believe and trust me, **200**
 And fly that Fate which with the Morning waits him. [*Aside.*]
 I grieve, my Lord, to find your hard Suspicion,
 Debars me from preserving your dear Life
 (Which not your own *Amestris* wishes more)
 To-Morrow's dawn (oh! let me yet prevail!) **205**
 The Cruel Queen resolves shall be your last.
 Oh fly! Let me Conjure⁹⁴ you, save your self.
 May that most awful God that here is worshipp'd
 Deprive me of his chearful Beams for ever,
 Make me the wretchedst thing he sees while living, **210**
 And after Death the lowest of the Damn'd,
 If I have any thought but for your Safety.

Artax. No, I have found the Malice of thy^d Mistress,
 Since I refus'd her Love when she was proffer'd
 By her Ambitious Father for my Bride, **215**
 And on a worthier Choice bestow'd my Heart,
 She vows Revenge on me for slighted Beauty.

Cleo. My Lord, you do her most unmanly wrong,
 She owns the Merit of the fair *Amestris*,
 Nor ever durst imagine she deserv'd you. **220**
 Oh spare that Thought, nor blot her Virgin's Fame.
 In silence still she wonder'd at your Vertues,
 Blest you, nor at her own Ill Fate repin'd;
 This wounds her most, that you suspect unkindly
 Th'Officious Piety that would have sav'd you. **225**
 Careless of an offended Father's Rage,
 For you alone concern'd, she charg'd me, guide you
 When Midnight Sleep had clos'd observing Eyes,
 Safe thro' her Father's Palace with^e this Key —
 And if I met with any that durst bar **230**
 Your Passage forth, she bid me greet him thus —
 [*Stabs her self, Artax. catching her as she falls.*]

Art. What has thou done, rash Boy?

Cleo. Giv'n you the last,
 And only Proof remain'd that could convince you,
 I held your Life much dearer than my own.

Mem. Horrid Amazement chills my freezing Veins!^f **235**

Cleo. Let me conjure you with my latest Breath,
 Make haste to seize the means that may preserve you;
 That Key,^g amidst the Tumult of this Night, [*Giving the Key.*]
 Will open you a way thro' *Mirza's* Palace:
 May every God assist and guard your Flight; **240**
 And oh when all your hopes of Love and Glory
 Are Crown'd with just Success; will you be good,
 And think with Pity on the lost *Cleone*.

Artax. Ten thousand dismal Fancies crowd my Thoughts:
 Oh! Is it possible thou can'st be she, **245**
 Thou most unhappy fair One?

Cleo. Spare my Shame,
 Nor call the Blood, that flows to give me Peace,
 Back to my dying Cheeks. Can you forget
 Who was my Father? And remember only
 How much I wish'd I had deserv'd your Friendship? **250**
 Nay, let my Tongue grow bold, and say, your Love;
 But 'twas not in my Fate.

Artax. What shall I say,
 To witness how my grateful Heart is touch'd?
 But oh why would'st thou give this fatal Instance?
 Why hast thou stain'd me with thy Virgin Blood? **255**
 I swear, sweet Saint, for thee I could forgive
 The Malice of thy Father, tho' he seeks
 My Life and Crown; thy Goodness might atone
 Ev'n for a Nation's Sins; look up and live,
 And thou shalt still be near me as my Heart. **260**

Cleo. Oh charming Sounds! that gently lull my Soul
 To everlasting Rest; I swear 'tis more,
 More Joy to die thus blest, than to have liv'd
 A Monarch's Bride; may every Blessing wait you
 In War and Peace, still may you be the greatest, **265**
 The Favourite of the gods, and Joy of Men —
 I faint! oh let me lean upon your Arm — [*She dies.*]

Artax. Hold up the Light, my Father; ha! she Swoons!
 The Iron Hand of Death is on her Beauties,
 And see like Lillies nipp'd with Frost they languish. **270**

Mem. My tough old Soldier's Heart melts at the Sight,
 And an unwonted Pity moves my Breast.
 Ill fated Maid, too good for that damn'd Race,
 From which thou drew'st thy Being! Sure the Gods,
 Angry e're while, will be at length appeas'd **275**
 With this Egregious Victim; Let us tempt 'em
 Now while they seem to smile.

Artax. A Beam of Hope
 Strikes thro' my Soul, like the first Infant Light,
 That glanc'd upon the Chaos; if we reach
 The open City, Fate may be ours again. **280**
 But oh whate'er Success or Happiness
 Attend my Life, still fair unhappy Maid,
 Still shall thy memory be my Grief and Honour.
 On one fix'd Day in each returning Year,
 Cypress and Myrtle for thy Sake I'll wear;⁹⁵ **285**
 Ev'n my *Amestris* thy hard Fate shall mourn,
 And with fresh Roses crown thy Virgin Urn;
 And in *Elysium*⁹⁶ blest, thy gentle Shade
 Shall own my Vows of Sorrow justly paid. [*Exeunt.*^h]

ACT V. SCENE I.

SCENE, *Mirza's Palace.*

Enter Mirza, Magas, and Attendants with Lights.

Mirz. PHO! You o'er-rate Danger.

Mag. If I do,
We err in the Extreame, since you esteem it
As much too lightly; think you then 'tis nothing,
This horrid Jar of Tumult and Confusion?
Heads white with Years, and vers'd in long Experience, **5**
Who yet remember all the different Changes
A Rolling Age produces, cannot call
To mind one Instance dreadful as this Night.
Infernal Discord, hideous to behold,
Hangs like its evil Genius o'er the City, **10**
And sends^a a Snake to ev'ry vulgar Breast.⁹⁷
From several Quarters the mad Rabble swarm
Arm'd with the Instruments of hasty Rage,
And in confus'd disorderly Array
Most formidable march; their differing Clamours, **15**
Together join'd compose one^b deafning Sound;
Arm! Arm! they Cry, Religion is no more,
Our Gods are slighted, whom if we revenge not
War, Pestilence and Famine will ensue,
And Universal Ruin swallow^c all. **20**

Mirz. A Crew of mean unthinking heartless Slaves!
With ease stirr'd up to Mutiny, and quell'd
With the same ease, with like Expressions shew
Their Joy or Anger, both are noise and tumult.
And still when Holydays make Labour cease, **25**
They meet and shout; do these deserve our Fears?

Mag. Most certainly they may; if we consider
Such Circumstance of Peril that concurs;⁹⁸
Tigranes, with the rest that 'scap'd the Temple,
Are mix'd among^d this Herd, and urge the Wrongs **30**
Which with the Gods their Prince and *Memnon* suffer.

Mirz. Nor need we fear ev'n that, safe in the Aid
And Number of our Friends, who treble theirs.

For this mad Rout that hum and swarm together,
 Yet want of somewhat to employ their Folly; 35
 Indulge 'em in their Fancy for Religion.
 Thou and thy holy Brotherhood of Priests,
 Shall in Procession bear the sacred Fire,
 And all our Golden Gods: Let their Friends judge
 If still they look not kindly as of Old; 40
 'Tis a most apt Amusement for a Crowd,
 They'll gaze, and gather round the gaudy Shew,
 And quite forget the Thoughts of Mutiny.
 A Guard shall wait you.

Mag. Why go not you too with us?
 They hold your Wisdom in most high regard, 45
 And will be greatly sway'd by your Perswasion;
 Th'occasion is well worth your Care and Presence.

Mirz. O! you'll not need my Aid: Besides, my Friend,
 My Hours this Night are destin'd to a Task
 Of more import, than are the Fates of Millions 50
 Such groveling Souls as theirs. As yet the Secret
 Is Immature, nor worth your present knowledge:
 To Morrow that and all my Breast is yours.
 I must not, dare not trust him with my weakness, [*Aside*]
 'Twill mark me for his scorn, 'tis yet some Wisdom 55
 If we must needs be Fools to hide our Folly.

Mag. He means the Pris'ners death: let him engross
 The Peoples hate, Monopolize Damnation,
 I will be safely Ignorant of Mischief. [*Aside*.
 Hereafter when your Wisdom shall think fit 60
 To share those Thoughts, and trust 'em with your Friend
 I shall be pleas'd to know; This instant Hour,
 My Cares are all employ'd on my own Province,
 Which hastes me hence.

Mirz. May all your Gods assist you. [*Exeunt.* 65

SCENE II. *An Apartment in Mirza's Palace.*

Enter Amestris.

Ames. Will ye not hear, ye ever Gracious Gods?
 Since sure you do not joy in our Misfortunes,

But only try the Strength of our frail Vertue.
 Are not my Sorrows full? Can ought be added?
 My Royal Lord and Father! ye dear Names **5**
 In which my all of Happiness was summ'd,
 What have the Ministers of Fate done with you?
 Are you not dead? Too sure! That's past a doubt;
 O *Memnon*! Oh my Prince! My Father! Oh my Husband!

Enter Mirza

Mirz. Such *Juno* was (except alone those Tears) **10**
 When, upon *Ida*'s Top, she charm'd the God
 That long had been a Stranger to her Bed;⁹⁹
 Made him forget the Business of the World,
 And lay aside his Providence, t'employ
 The whole Divinity upon her Beauty. **15**
 And sure 'twas worth the while, had I been *Jove*,
 So had I too been pleas'd, to be deceiv'd
 Into Immortal Joys. Oh cease thy Tears! —

Ames. Give 'em me back, or if the Grave and thou
 Restore to none, oh joyn my Fate to theirs; **20**
 Shut us together in some silent Vault,
 Where I may sit and weep till Death's kind Hand
 Shall lay me gently by my Lord's dear side,
 And hush my Sorrows in Eternal Slumber.

Mirz. In pity to your Form assuage those Tears; **25**
 Sorrow in^a Beauty's Bane; nor let your Breast
 Harbour a Fear; I wage not War with fair ones;
 But wish you would efface those ugly Thoughts,
 That live in your Remembrance to perplex you;
 Let Joy, the Native of your Soul, return, **30**
 And Love's gay god sit smiling in your Eyes,¹⁰⁰
 As e'rst he did; I wish you wondrous well,
 And would so fully Recompence the Loss
 You fondly mourn, that when you count the Gains,
 Your self should own your Fortunes are well chang'd. **35**

Ames. Oh Impious Comforter! talk'st thou of Joy,
 When Nature dictates only Death and Horror?
 Is there a God can break the Laws of Fate,
 And give me back the precious Lives I've lost?
 What nam'st thou Recompence? Can ought atone **40**

For Blood? a Father's and a Husband's Blood?
Such Comfort brings the hungry midnight Wolf,
When having slain the Shepherd, smear'd with Gore,
He leaps amidst the helpless bleating Flock.

Mirz. Away with this Perverseness of thy Sex, **45**
These foolish Tears, these peevish Sighs and Sobblings!
Look up, be gay, and cheer me with thy Beauties,
And, to thy wish I will indulge thy Fancy.
Not all the imagin'd Splendor of the Gods
Shall match thy Pomp, sublimely shalt thou shine, **50**
The Boast and Glory of our *Asian* World;
Nor shall one She of all thy towring Sex
Out-rival thee (thou lovely Fair) in Power,
Oh think on Power, on Power and Place supreme.

Ames. There is but one, one only thing to think on, **55**
My Murther'd Lord, and his dark gaping Grave,
That waits unclos'd impatient of my coming.

Mirz. Oh listen gentle Maid, while I impart
A Story of such Softness to thy Ear,
As (like the Halcyon brooding o'er the Waves)¹⁰¹ **60**
May with its Influence hush thy stormy Griefs.

Ames. Begone, and if thou bear'st one Thought of Pity
In that hard Breast, oh leave me to my self,
Nor by thy Presence hideous to my Soul,
And horrid Consolations, strive to add **65**
To my full Woes that swell'd without thy Help,
All ready rise and bubble o'er the Margent.

Mirz. What if I talk'd of Love?

Ames. Of Love! oh Monster!

Mirz. If Love be monstrous, so is this fair Frame,
This beauteous World, this Canopy, the Sky, **70**
That sparkling shines with Gems of Light innumerable?
And so art thou and I, since Love made all;
Who kindly reconcil'd the jarring Atoms
In friendly League, and bid 'em be a World.¹⁰²
Frame not thy lovely Mouth then to Blaspheme **75**
Thy great Creator; thou art his and made for

His more peculiar Service; thy bright Eyes,
 Thy moist red Lip, thy rising snowy Bosom,
 Thy every Part was made to furnish Joy,
 Ev'n to a riotous Excess of Happiness; **80**
 Oh give me but to taste thy blissful Charms,
 And take my Wealth, my Honour, Power, take all,
 All, All for Recompence.

Ames. Execrable Wretch!
 Thus! Is it thus thou wouldst assuage my Sorrows?
 When thy inhuman Bloody Cruelty, **85**
 Now with redoubling Pangs cleaves my poor Heart,
 Com'st thou bespotted with the recent Slaughter
 To proffer impious Love? Accursed Fiend!
 Horror and Grief shall turn me to a Fury,¹⁰³
 Still with my Ecchoing Cries I will pursue thee, **90**
 And hollow^b Vengeance in thy guilty Ears;
 Vengeance for Murther! for my Prince's Murther!
 And for my poor old Father. Think^c not, Villain,
 Who art the Plague and Scourge of Human-kind,
 That there is Peace for thee, whilst I run mad **95**
 With raging Sorrow; Vengeance, Vengeance waits thee,
 Great as my Woes! — My dear! dear! *Artaxerxes!*

Mirz. I am not lucky at the glossing¹⁰⁴ Art
 Of catching Girls with Words, but 'tis no matter,
 Force is a sure Resort, and when at last **100**
 Fierce as a tawring Falcon from her Height,
 I stoop to strike the Prey, it is my own. [*Aside.*
 Obstinate Fool! how dar'st thou cross my Wishes?
 Since the same Hand that has aveng'd me well
 Upon my other Foes, Commands thy Fate: **105**
 Tho' Mercy in Compassion of thy Beauty
 Reach out her Hand to save thee, yet if urg'd
 Revenge may still take place; think well on that.

Ames. That, that is all the Mercy which I ask;
 Indulge thy thirsty Malice in my Blood, **110**
 And hasten me to Peace. My Woman's Heart
 Shall gather all its little stock of Courage
 To arm me for the Blow. Tho' Death be terrible,
 Ghastly and Pale; yet I will joy to meet him;
 My better Life already is destroy'd, **115**
 Imperfect now, and wanting half my self,