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Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and the Theatrical Eclogue

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4. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and the Theatrical Eclogue

The mock eclogue was often called the 'town eclogue' (especially works by Swift and John Gay) or the 'court eclogue' (especially works by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu).¹ But if one were looking for a descriptive title for this genre which flourished briefly and intensely in the early eighteenth century, a good one would be 'theatrical eclogue': perhaps not for Swift's work, but for Gay's and especially for Montagu's, which is my subject here.

The theatrical connection provides a means to a fresh look at these poems. All eclogues of course are either (dramatic) monologues or dialogues, so they have something in common with dramatic speech. But with these particular eclogues the relationship goes deeper: not only because Lady Mary was a keen theatre-goer, play-reader, and dramatic critic (she had already written a somewhat academic analysis of Addison's *Cato*), not only because she was later to write at least two dramatic pieces,² but from the character of the poems themselves.

Gay, when he began writing theatrical eclogues, was just about to embark on his dramatic career with *The What D'Ye Call It*, 1715. (The title referred to its being a 'tragi-comi-pastoral farce,' but of course it sounded like a *double entendre*, and for that reason 'some Prudes Scrupled to go to' it.)³ Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, when she began writing theatrical eclogues, had just embarked on a more nebulous career: she aimed to make her mark as a courtier to George I and/or to the Prince of Wales, later George II. Amid the scramble for patronage under these new rulers, one of her responses was to join in, but another was to satirise careerism. A couple of months after reaching London early in George I's reign — a dawn of bliss for ambitious Whigs — she wrote a poem she called 'Roxana Or the Drawing room'. This later became 'Monday,' the first of her eclogue series (which has a poem for every day of the week except Sunday).

All but one of these six eclogues begin with scene-setting, just in the manner of the stage, to contextualize the speaker or speakers. (The one that opens differently does so for a reason, discussed below.) 'Monday's' protagonist is one of the prudes who scrupled to go to Gay's play.

Roxana — the Duchess of Roxburgh — speaks the poem on her way home from court.⁴ She is near the centre of London, ‘at St James’s Gate’: outside the palace, on the edge of the park, where there must have been a stand for sedan chairs. The chairmen who are about to carry her home get a supporting role. They lament that their fare is such a weight; she laments that the Princess of Wales has given a coveted court post not to her but to someone else. She complains about the court’s low moral standards, as evinced by its enthusiasm for Gay’s ‘filthy’ *What D’Ye Call It* — that is, for the command performance of 24 February 1715. This poem relates quite precisely to a precise theatrical event as well as to actual real-life characters.⁵

I shall argue the theatricality of Montagu’s eclogues on several grounds. Their first theatrical element is the *mise-en-scène*. This embraces not only what might be called the backdrop, but clothes, make-up, props (all very important in these poems), as well as the elements of disguise or role-playing, and of the gaze: displaying and being displayed to. The second theatrical element is the characterisation. The method of presenting character in these poems is more like drama than is that of Gay’s eclogues: what is said in Montagu’s poems counts less than who says it, and in what circumstances. The fact that she bases characters on actual people is important less in itself than because the parallels with life provide clues to the speakers’ very particularised points of view. These poems were written as in-texts for readers in the know.

The eclogues’ plots, their final theatrical element, are often reminiscent of Restoration comedy. Some readers might disagree, on the grounds that courtship, in the sense of choice of life-partner, is not an issue. But there *is* a sustained, devastating critique of forced marriage (as there is in the plays not only of Behn but of her male contemporaries in comedy as well), and marked attention is paid to that other theme of the Restoration stage, Hobbesian competitiveness. All Montagu’s male characters are competing to win, and all her women have been beaten in some contest or other.

Montagu has a lot of fun with scene-setting. It reflects her love-hate relation with fashionable society or the glittering world of the young and rich, and it reflects a view of that world as ‘spectacular politics’.⁶ ‘Monday’ takes place late at night; the duchess is hanging around in a liminal space between the court and the town. She complains about the effort it took to make herself look good, to get her jewels re-set and the roses in her hair arranged. While she speaks she is cramming her body into the tiny closed box of the sedan chair; the dressy court lies behind her. This setting strikes a note which is characteristic of the whole eclogue series. All Montagu’s speakers are caught on the edge of some social activity:

lingering, withdrawn, like an actor who leaves the company to come down to the footlights and confide in the audience.

'Tuesday' and 'Thursday,' dialogue poems, engage two young men and two young women respectively: pairs of competitors who strive to outboast each other. 'Tuesday' 's males vie in their conquests among women.⁷ They too are in a liminal space, a liminal moment, lingering in the (male-only) coffee-house when everyone else has gone off to the opera. They have their own theatrical props as well: the first speaker 'pick'd his Teeth' — no doubt with a jewelled toothpick — before speaking. Meanwhile the opera stars are making up, the middle classes have taken their seats already, and the beauties are still dressing to create a sensation when they come in late. But the scene-setting lines (after the author's invocation of an individual male listener) are, 'St James's bell had toll'd some wretches in, / As tatter'd Riding hoods alone could sin.' From this she turns to the 'happier Sinners' preparing to see and be seen at the opera. The word 'Sinners' seems to suggest that the tattered church-goers are not *merely* poor women, but prostitutes. This is Montagu's glimpse into the shadows outside the charmed circle, her equivalent to Pope's 'Wretches hang that Jury-men may Dine.'⁸

The female speakers of 'Thursday' inhabit an equally set-apart space, the dressing-room at a venue for gambling.⁹ They too have their props: the prize they compete for is an 'Equipage,' or elaborately crafted sewing kit. They competitively compare their respective addictions, cards and love: the winner is not the one who gets most pleasure but the one who gets most pain. The woman who loves cards has lost the game; the woman who loves love has lost her lover. The choice between love and cards is not — any more than the choice in Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* — a simple matter of one or the other. The woman who loves love chose a gambler as her object of desire, and the woman who loves cards feels an almost physical appetite at the sight of the table *spread* with money that she stands to win.

In both 'Tuesday' and 'Thursday' the frame scene contains briefer scenes, sharply visualised in narratives which function like an inner scene opened at the back of the contemporary stage. The rakes present their love-objects visually served up, as women's bodies had now for two generations been offered on the stage for audience pleasure. The fun of these poems lies partly in their assumption of giddy-headed delight in accoutrements: in stays fashioned by Cosins, or in an erotic tableau fashioned by the woman who displays herself:

Warm from her Bed, to me alone within,
Her Nightgown fasten'd with a single Pin,
Her Nightcloaths tumbled with resistless Grace

And her bright Hair play'd careless round her Face.
 Reaching the Kettle, made her Gown unpin,
 She wore no Wastcoat, and her Shift was thin.¹⁰

The face framed in curls, the body framed in a décolletage: all are staged. And whereas in romance the lover who spies the charms of his beloved typically catches her off her guard, often asleep, here the words 'to me alone within' suggest that the woman is complicit in her own objectivization. (She has, in fact, more agency than the male love-object in 'Thursday' 's parallel tableau, whose heartbeat at a tender moment shakes the lace of his cravat.) The cravat is a brand-name one: Mechlin lace. The highly erotic visualisations of these tableaux depend on their props: on artifice at several levels.

Further mockery inheres in 'Tuesday' 's context (known to the poem's original readers, lost today). The real-life original of Patch, who is challenged by Silliander in debate and defeats him, married a fabulously wealthy sixteen-year-old heiress in the year of the eclogue, while the prototype for Silliander apparently married — some years later — not for money but for love.¹¹

The eclogue which begins without *mis-en-scène* is 'Wednesday'.¹² It has no sedan chair, no tolling bell, no dressing-room. Its characters are a male-female couple, the only one in the eclogues; they are not in competition, like the male-male and female-female pairs, but they are in conflict. The woman has almost all the lines, but she seems to speak from a position of weakness. This poem's perspective from its opening line is inward; only when speech dries up do Dancinda and Strephon have recourse to their props. Then at last she fixes 'her Eyes upon her Fan' and he takes a pinch of snuff, revealing, as it were, how they are costumed: not as Arcadian shepherd and shepherdess but as Georgian courtiers. This moment changes everything. The props provide the turning point of the poem, like a recognition scene on the stage.

The four monologue or near-monologue poems, 'Monday,' 'Wednesday,' 'Friday' and 'Saturday,' present problems of interpretation more complex than those in the dialogues; but these problems can be solved by attention to the speakers' dramatic point of view. Every speaker is enmeshed in the publicly competitive world of 'Tuesday' and 'Thursday' (though Dancinda in 'Wednesday' vainly wishes herself out of it, and Flavia in 'Saturday' finds her hold on it crumbling). This world of power-struggle centres on the court.

Roxana, as already noted, condemns the Princess of Wales's court as immoral. Her tirade against it begins, 'Let the Nice Hind now suckle dirty Pigs,' and ends 'a vertuous Princesse with a Court so lewd.' She puts forward two reasons for making this judgement. The first thing she

holds against the princess is allotting the job she wanted to Coquettilla, whom she presents as a shameless hussy. Coquettilla's real-life original was an Italian of obscure background. Her marriage into the English peerage had certainly roused latent xenophobia,¹³ but it does not follow that it had shocked Lady Mary or her projected readers.

The second charge brought by Roxana against the princess and her courtiers is that they enjoyed Gay's 'filthy' play. Readers of the poem, insofar as they were also readers or spectators of the play, knew that it was not in any way filthy. Roxana stands condemned as an unreliable judge: if she rejects the princess, that suggests the princess is all right. Yet it seems that Montagu suffered the same fate as Defoe and others, of having her irony misread as plain statement. Gossip said that when someone broke the seal of secrecy under which this poem was circulating privately, and showed it to the princess, the princess failed to decode the double turn. She was not amused.¹⁴

I believe that a somewhat similar fate has overtaken the other monologue poems. Readers have paid too much attention to the words ('a Court so lewd!') and not enough to the dramatic situations. In 'Wednesday,' for instance, Strephon is demanding a sexual reward for his sighs and tears, while Dancinda begs him to rest content with platonic affection: 'Love is a Child, and like a Child he plays!' As she recapitulates their affair, it sounds to modern ears like something extorted from her with no reference to her own wishes, just like the material love-tokens which Patch and Silliander in 'Tuesday' literally steal from the women they pursue. Strephon used 'ensnaring Art,' Dancinda says, to capture her 'fond, uncautious Heart'; he promised to rest content with friendship. Now he has withdrawn that promise. Since the time he made it, Dancinda's love and her mental conflict have become more and more publicly visible; her reputation hangs in the balance. Her lover now demands that she transgress her mother's maxims and soil her family honour; she is certain that even if she complies she will soon be abandoned.

Dancinda's plea takes up most of the poem. Then comes the turn previously mentioned, introduced with 'She paus'd, and fix'd her Eyes upon her Fan.' The modern world of material objects breaks in on the lovers' two conflicting subjectivities. The reader now discovers for the first time that Dancinda is married: indeed, her husband is about to break in on her and Strephon. In Lady Mary's manuscript, 'She paus'd' begins a new page, and before she wrote it Lady Mary had to cross out a heading apparently intended for a different piece of writing, in prose. The end of this poem was a site either of authorial indecision or of authorial contest.

On stage (where no speaking subjectivity lacks its material embodiment) the very Restoration-comedy situation of two lovers surprised by

a husband would have to be played for laughs if not tragedy. The laugh would be on the husband if the affair was consummated; unconsummated love would give the husband a comic triumph over the non-adulterers. A woman yearning for love without sex might be excusable if she was a virgin. A married woman making such a plea would have to be either an unfeeling tease, or else a hypocrite whose speech was nothing but a mask for actions she would disavow to any audience whatsoever. According to such a reading of the poem, Dancinda's position is completely undercut by the revelation that she is not a virgin but married.¹⁵ I have come to believe that such a reading is mistaken.

The key lies in the dramatic situation. Firstly, as could be proved by a glance at Lady Mary's own personal history and those of her sisters and all their friends, the husband coming upstairs in 'Wednesday' should not be read as likely ever to have been the object of Dancinda's love. She should not be assumed to have exercised any choice in her marriage, or to be finding any emotional satisfaction or support in it. Readers are to see her as a woman with sexual feelings, whose 'wishes' and 'burning Blushes' her lover calculatedly arouses although there is no prospect of her satisfying them without disgrace and self-hatred. Montagu's ending to the poem is this: 'The sighing Dame to meet her Dear prepares; / While Strephon cursing slips down the back Stairs.' The predatory, irresponsible male slides away, leaving the female shut up together with her unloved 'Dear'.

The dramatising poet, like an epistolary novelist, expresses no attitude of her own. But there is some extratextual evidence of her attempt to control readings of this poem. Joseph Spence, who read it under her tuition, took at face value its idealization of love as childish play. But Pope seems to have favoured, perhaps to have composed, a different ending in which Dancinda *wishes* that Strephon had achieved his desire instead of wasting the time in talk. She recants, too late, her attempted evasion of the heterosexual plot. Pope transcribed this ending in the beautiful presentation copy which he made for Lady Mary; she defaced its beauty so far as to scratch out his conclusion and reinstate her own. She kept, however, a copy of what is unmistakably a third ending to this poem, although it renames Dancinda 'Delia,' and leaves Strephon unnamed. In this conclusion no husband appears (so the marital status of the female speaker is not revealed). The lover achieves his wishes, having first vindicated masculine desire in a speech asserting his fidelity. These lines end, 'Fair Delia blush'd, while he put out the Light, / And all that follow'd was Eternal Night.' But Montagu chose and insisted on the other ending, which leaves Dancinda trapped in loveless marriage.¹⁶

'Eternal Night' seems to mean that the lovers' guilty pleasure goes undiscovered and unproved. This would be an ending in tune with

the view taken by Smilinda in 'Thursday': 'Think of that Moment, you who Prudence boast; / For such a Moment, Prudence well were lost!' Smilinda disclaims regret over illicit pleasure; but she is consumed by regret for a lover whose loss the poem judges barely distinguishable from that of a game of cards. To think of Patch and Silliander in 'Tuesday' is to remember that Dancinda's night, like Smilinda's moment, would be a brief one, that Strephon's promises of fidelity are promises made to be broken. The ending to 'Wednesday' which Montagu retained, though not wholly unproblematic, is less problematic than the one she left floating detached from its dramatic situation.

The even more problematic 'Friday' becomes clearer in the light of its companion eclogues. As is widely known, this poem was claimed — in two different versions — by two authors. It appears in Montagu's *Essays and Poems* as hers, and in Gay's *Poetry and Prose* as his. The only critic to have fruitfully engaged with this issue is the late Ann Messenger.¹⁷ I have built on her work here, though my conclusions are somewhat different.

Montagu's holograph manuscript of this poem (in a volume which stakes out a claim to exclusive authorship in an assertive note) has 78 lines. Forty-three of those coincide word-for-word with lines in the version which Gay published as his, which has 106 lines.¹⁸ Pope said that Gay wrote it; but he was not quite consistent in saying this, and he weakened his testimony by not knowing which eclogue in Montagu's series was written first.¹⁹ I shall argue that her version and Gay's are two different poems, though the difference rests less in the words than in the dramatic situation of the poem's speaker, Lydia. It is a striking comment on reading methods that the difference in *situation* has hardly been noticed. The words have been scrutinized, but not the plot.

'Friday' (by Montagu) and 'The Toilette' (by Gay) differ in one of the ways that 'Wednesday' differs from its unattached conclusion. Montagu's Lydia is married; Gay's is not. Each version of the poem begins by picturing Lydia: thirty-five years old, past her prime, lamenting 'th'Inconstancy of Man'.²⁰ The inset scenes evoked belong not to her present but to her past:

No Lovers now her morning Hours molest
 And catch her at her Toilette halfe undrest,²¹
 The thundering Knocker wakes the street no more,
 Nor Chairs, nor Coaches, croud the silent door.

Montagu's Lydia — but not Gay's — gazes out of the window as if her house were a trap or a prison (like Dancinda's).²² In both versions the opening paragraph makes poetry out of daily life; but halfway through the paragraph Gay's version slips away into the poetry of whimsy and

fantasy. Fashionable pets replace the traditional shepherdess's flock: 'Around her wait Shocks [i.e. lapdogs], monkeys and mockaws, / To fill the place of Fops, and perjur'd Beaus.' Already Gay's Lydia is more of an object, less of a subject, than Montagu's.

Gay centres Lydia's speech on the way she has been displaced in Damon's affections by the younger Chloe. In his version she has just learned that her rival is 'now what Lydia was before!' — that is, an object of adoration. She fears Damon is *going* to marry Chloe; she comforts herself by scorning her rival's servile aptitude for marriage, and by the thought that she, Chloe, has pride enough to spurn him for inconstancy, and to shrug off rejection with the aid of cosmetics and her maid's flattery. This is a stock situation: woman seduced and abandoned.

Montagu's Lydia faces a different, more individualised dilemma: not that her lover may marry but that he may discard her for the wife he already has. She too is married, but not to him. As he veers away from her and back towards fidelity, Montagu's Lydia — not Gay's — wonders self-tormentingly, 'To please your Wife am I unkindly us'd?' She, the mistress, has been unsisterly towards the wife as long as she had the upper hand: 'Her Credulous Freindship, and her Stupid Ease, / Have often been my Jest in happier Days.' To be abandoned for a wife is clearly a harder blow to her *amour-propre* than it would be to be abandoned for a change of mistress. Montagu's Lydia comforts herself in the same way as Gay's, in believing she has a personal superiority to her successful rival. But where Gay's protagonist asserts that she is too independent for marriage, hers looks forward to revenge of a kind that a wife would not dare to offer a husband. Anger predominates in her; in Gay's Lydia anger is almost submerged in wistful regret. Indeed, to approach the poem with the idea that Gay may have tinkered with Montagu's original, rather than the other way round, is to perceive his Lydia's most fighting lines as oddly out of key with her overall tone.

The overlap between the two versions must not be underestimated. They use the same words for closing as well as opening; Montagu's Lydia deludes herself, just like Gay's, that her beauty and power are going to last. But her situation makes her story quite different from a usual one of seduction and abandonment.²³ Gay's Lydia faces the timeless dilemma of ageing and the social failure of remaining unmarried (the kind of thing a man might easily pity a woman for). Montagu's Lydia faces a sharply particularized problem posed by contemporary marriage practices. She is being discarded less because she has aged than because she has taken on the illicit role of mistress. Her predicament is one unknown to ancient pastoral, and one with which a male is unlikely to sympathise. It is peculiar to the modern world of loveless marriages and inheritance imperatives; and her own part in it will not bear scrutiny.

She is a mistress in the sense of a kept woman, not a beloved, and she has been behaving with the kind of petty malice popularly associated with this role. Far from being a pure figure of pathos, she is deeply compromised morally, having actively colluded with the very system which now discards her.²⁴

Montagu's version sounds, as Gay's does not, as if it were tailored to the specificity of some real-life situation. Sure enough, she based her Lydia on Mary Coke, mistress of Lord Berkeley, Lydia's lover Damon on Berkeley himself, and Damon's wife Chloe on Lady Berkeley.²⁵ She wrote her poem when Lady Berkeley ('a Wife for breed') had either just borne or was just about to bear her husband a son and heir. He was to mark his appreciation by discarding his 'Miss for pleasure'. This mistress had herself borne a child of Lord Berkeley's — or a child which gossip assumed to be Lord Berkeley's — a few years before. But the purpose of 'breed' was not to be achieved by a child born out of wedlock — only by an heir.

'Friday,' then, is not about the timeless triumph of the young and lovely over the ageing. Lydia confronts a collapse in her market value: but not merely by age.²⁶ This poem presents the socially approved triumph of the licit over the illicit: the way transgression meets retribution. Like 'Wednesday,' it presents the plight of a woman who is a moral agent, not a pure victim, and who bears considerable blame herself. Like 'Monday,' it offers the appeal of up-to-the-minute court scandal. The original of Lydia was married to the king's Vice-Chamberlain; that of Chloe was a Lady of the Bedchamber to the princess.

The final eclogue, 'Saturday,' stands out from the series as something different. According to family tradition, Lady Mary later said she had expressed her own feelings while recovering from her attack of small-pox: knowing she was going to survive (after probably two days thinking she was going to die), but fearing she might be 'totally disfigured'. Now readily available in the Norton Anthology and elsewhere, the poem is well on its way to becoming the best-known, the representative sample of Montagu's work. Yet much is lost by separating it from the other five eclogues.

In its splendid isolation it is generally read as autobiography, as pathos lightly touched with irony. Its speaker, Flavia, explicitly equates her loss of beauty with death: an equation which is reinforced by the poem's position in the series, but undermined by reading Flavia in the way that I have been reading the other protagonists. Traditionally, the last in a series of eclogues (in Gay's mock eclogues as in Virgil's and Pope's straight ones) is a lament for someone's death. Flavia has no doubt that this is the end. Her final couplet pronounces her farewell to

everything she knows: 'Ye Operas, Circles, I no more must view! / My Toilette, Patches, all the World Adieu!'

But if Flavia is read as inhabiting the world of Dancinda and Lydia, Silliander and Patch, there can be no doubt about the narrowness of that 'all the World' to which she bids her anguished adieu. Indeed, a double meaning lurks in 'Patches': not only the beauty-spots which have been part of her social, her theatrical make-up, but the inconstant, self-serving, vainglorious lovers, like Patch of 'Tuesday,' who have been her audience and her fellow-performers. 'Circles,' similarly, are court circles, and also the wooden O of theatre seats. The final couplet of the series functions like an epilogue withdrawing from both aspects of the performative space: stage and dressing-room.

To have smallpox was a negation of performativity. It meant prolonged, excruciating pain and loss of control; it meant fear of literal death; its temporary disfigurement made the sufferer actually unrecognisable. Flavia leaves all this unspoken; the genre she speaks could not contain it. She is a fellow of Lydia or Roxana; her 'bloom' was important to her because of the role it fitted her for, the effects it enabled her to achieve. Her name may be borrowed from Anne Finch's 'The Appology,' where it was given to a woman of forty who, her beauty lost, still clung to a shadow of her lifestyle as a giddy fifteen-year-old.²⁷ What Lady Mary's Flavia laments is beauty as power, beauty as performance: her mirror as a hero's scutcheon, her picture as an object of display.²⁸ At the close of 'Saturday' it is self-in-costume, female identity as object of desire, which is being discarded.

Like the earlier speakers, Flavia is not wholly passive. She scripts and enacts her own departure. In the existing repertoire (plots of scheming and competition) she sees the only role remaining to her as one which combines loser with victim of deceit: a recipient of hypocritical condolences on her losing. This role she rejects, preferring a grand exit instead. The force of her farewell depends on the retrospective delight with which her speech evokes her starring performances of the past, but it also depends on the way her stage-as-world — her arena of competitive display — has been incrementally created throughout the earlier poems. Through her series overall, Montagu shows the 'Losers pain' (generally the stuff of present experience) predominating over the 'Winners Pleasure,' which is generally located in the speaker's past.²⁹ Her goal is not to promote sympathy for victims, for none of her losers is an innocent bystander. It is to expose her characters' role-playing and to analyse the workings of the illusion. Flavia enacts part of her creator's recent experience; but Flavia, unlike her creator, has no other stage to go to. Lady Mary — or as criticism more properly says, Montagu — is not to be

identified with the speaker of this poem; she is the author-director of her theatrical series.

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Endnotes

- 1 Swift, *Poems*, ed. Harold Williams (Oxford: Clarendon, 1937) 1087-9; Gay, *Poetry and Prose*, ed. Vinton A. Dearing and Charles E. Beckwith (Oxford: Clarendon, 1974) 1: 84, 100, 181-5; Montagu, *Essays and Poems and Simplicity A Comedy*, ed. Robert Halsband and Isobel Grundy (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977, 1993) 182-204, hereafter *E&P*. Curll published three of Montagu's poems as *Court Poems*, 1716; she never used either qualifier, but called her work just 'Eclogues' (Harrowby MSS Trust, Sandon Hall, Staffordshire, 256).
- 2 Critique of *Cato, Simplicity* (from Marivaux) and the unpublished 'Some People' (*E&P* 62-8, 313-79; Harrowby MS 255).
- 3 Pope's note, in his exquisite copy made for Lady Mary: *Court Eclogs Written in the Year, 1716. Alexander Pope's autograph manuscript of poems by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, ed. Robert Halsband (New York: New York Public Library and Readex Books, 1977) 5.
- 4 *E&P* 182-5.
- 5 The copy owned by Lord Harley, later Lord Oxford (husband of the former Lady Henrietta Cavendish-Holles, a friend of Lady Mary), is dated '1714-15,' i.e. Jan.-March 1715 (BL Lansdowne MS 852. 184-5). In Feb. 1715 the duchess objected on moral grounds to another play which the princess liked (Mary, Lady Cowper, *Diary ... 1714-1720*, London: John Murray, 1864, 46).
- 6 Paula Backscheider's phrase: *Spectacular Politics, theatrical power and mass culture in early modern England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1993).
- 7 *E&P* 185-9.
- 8 *The Rape of the Lock* 1714, iii. 22.
- 9 *E&P* 193-8.
- 10 'Tuesday' (70-75), *E&P* 188.
- 11 Algernon Seymour m. Frances Thynne (b. 1699) in 1715; John Campbell m. Mary Bellenden in 1720.
- 12 *E&P* 189-93.
- 13 Gossip said Charles Talbot, Duke of Shrewsbury, had seduced Adelaide Paleotti and been forced by her brothers to marry her. Sarah Duchess of Marlborough complained of her strange manner of 'thrusting out her disagreeable breasts' (Sir David Hamilton, *Diary 1709-1714*, ed. Philip Roberts [Oxford: Clarendon, 1975] 93, 121; Ann Somerset, *Ladies in Waiting, from the Tudors to the present day* [London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1984] 201-2). The Duchess of Shrewsbury, however, was a good friend of Edward Wortley Montagu and had forwarded his courtship

- of Lady Mary. She was appointed Lady of the Bedchamber Extraordinary (not by the princess's choice) in Oct. 1714 (Mary, Lady Cowper, *Diary* 8-9).
- 14 Lady Loudoun, 3 Jan. 1716, Huntington MS LO 7417. Defoe's *Shortest Way with the Dissenters* (1702) had suffered similarly from over-literal reading.
- 15 Such undercutting would parallel Prior's 'To a Young Gentleman in Love. A Tale,' where a woman speaks high-flown platonic to one lover, then on his departure calls out another from under the bed (*Literary Works*, ed. H. B. Wright and M. K. Spears [Oxford: Clarendon, 1959] 193-5).
- 16 Joseph Spence, *Polymetis* (1747) 70; Pope's transcript of *Court Eclogs* 41; *E&P* 192-3.
- 17 'Town Eclogues,' in *His and Hers: Essays in Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Literature* (Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1986) 84-107.
- 18 Her version, *E&P* 198-200; his (published in his *Poems on Several Occasions* [1720], to which she subscribed), *Poetry and Prose* 572-3.
- 19 Gay claimed the poem *only* by including it in his works. His editors argue that its metrics are demonstrably his. Montagu made her claim twice: once in her album 'wrote by me, without the assistance of one Line from any other. Mary Wortley Montagu,' and again in a note to the poem in Dodsley's *Collection* (1st ed. 1748), made in 1756. Pope thought it not hers in 1717, and omitted it from his transcription. In 1729 he implied it *was* hers. In 1735 (at the height of his campaign against her) he said it was 'almost wholly Gay's' with 'only five or six lines new set in it' by her (Gay, *Poetry and Prose* ii. 572-3; Harrowby MS 256; Pope in Spence, *Observations, Anecdotes, and Characters of Books and Men, Collected from Conversation*, ed. J. M. Osborn [Oxford: Clarendon, 1966] no. 236; Pope, *The Dunciad*, ed. James Sutherland [London and New Haven: Methuen and Yale UP, 1943, 1963] 104). Walpole thought all six eclogues were by the same hand.
- 20 All quotations not otherwise identified are from Montagu's version.
- 21 Like Patch in 'Tuesday'.
- 22 I owe this point to Ann Messenger.
- 23 For a slightly different comparative reading, see Messenger 84-107.
- 24 Messenger notes that whereas Gay's Lydia avoids the shops out of sentiment, Montagu's does not want to pay for things herself instead of receiving them as gifts from admirers — and that along with her heartlessness she has admirable wit, courage, and clarity of self-assessment (89, 96).
- 25 Pope's and Spence's notes.
- 26 Chloe clings to fifteen-year-old looks and manner; the actual Lady Berkeley was only twenty-one, though she had been married four or five years. Lady Mary had celebrated her beauty before her marriage in a juvenile poem (Harrowby MS 251). She was to die of smallpox in 1717 — not much more than a year from the date of the eclogue.
- 27 *Poems*, ed. Myra Reynolds (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1903) 13. 'The Appology' was unpublished, but Lady Mary owned MS copies of several poems by Finch.
- 28 Marcia Pointon has related these lines to portraits of Lady Mary, of which later ones continue to depict the idealised, not the physically disfigured face ('Killing Pictures,' *Painting and the Politics of Culture, New Essays on British Art 1700-1850*, ed. John Barrell [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992] 39-72). But whereas the no-longer-beautiful Flavia wanted the picture of her beauty torn or destroyed,

Lady Mary apparently felt comfortable enough with her own pre-smallpox image (as painted by Kneller in 1715) to go on circulating it and presenting copies to friends.

29 Cardelia on the cash rewards of the game of basset ('Thursday,' *E&P* 196).