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Political Philosophy in the Comedies of Eglinton Wallace

BY

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled **Political Philosophy in the Comedies of Eglinton Wallace** submitted by **Eleana Yun** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **Master of Arts**.

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ABSTRACT

Eglinton Lady Wallace (d.1803) was a Scots miscellaneous writer whose works belong in diverse genres such as non-fiction prose, poetry, political pamphlets and drama. Known as an outspoken, intelligent woman of wit, Wallace started her writing career after formally separating from her husband.

This thesis is concerned with the three comedies Wallace wrote between 1787 and 1795. Though she did not achieve fame or fortune, these plays are important for their feminist, social and political viewpoints. Writing at a time characterized by an increasing moral sensibility and by intense ideological debates concerning feminist issues and Parliamentary reform, Wallace's plays not only reflect these issues but they also illustrate the problems faced by playwrights who risked being unconventional. Chapter One describes the nature of the theatre and the particular problems faced by women playwrights. Chapter Two discusses Diamond Cut Diamond (1787), Wallace's translation of a French comedy, as an attempt to inject a feminist perspective into a typical sentimental comedy, limited by the original's intent and format. Chapter Three examines The Ton; or the Follies of Fashion (1788), a play dramatizing Wallace's feminist polemic against the effects of hypocritical values practised by a fashionable society that devalues women. She uses a rationalist argument to expose the truths behind conventional myths used to oppress women. In the process, Wallace redefines several key concepts of supposedly ideal female behaviour thereby providing a more realistic and more understanding portrait of women and society. Chapter Four discusses The Whim (1795) in its social-political context of the 1790s. Wallace is seen as a politician who uses conservative, reformist and revolutionary arguments in a dramatization of what constitutes a stable, harmonious society based on a sovereignty of the people doctrine. Chapter Five summarizes the previous chapters and discusses Wallace's contribution to women's literary history.

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Chapter One Introduction

Late eighteenth century theatre has been known more for its degeneration of artistic standards than for any dramatic achievements.[1] Many books have dealt with the authors and the plays of this period but they usually end with Richard Brinsley Sheridan, who is touted as the last dramatist to produce comedy uninfluenced by sentimental elements.[2] The years 1780 to 1800 have been neglected, though Charles Macklin, George Colman (the younger), Richard Cumberland and Thomas Holcroft have become the usual representatives of the drama of the period. As for women playwrights, the latter part of the century saw an increasing number of women who wrote plays that were produced and or published. Of the 288 plays written by women between 1660 and 1800, 106 belong to the last two decades of the eighteenth century (Stanton 331). Yet, only two names are usually mentioned in accounts of women's drama of this period: Hannah Cowley and Elizabeth Inchbald. Many of the other women playwrights, having written only one or two plays, have faded into obscurity. One of these "forgotten" dramatists is Eglinton Wallace (d.1803). Her three plays, Diamond Cut Diamond (1787), The Ton (1788) and The Whim (1795), did not achieve fame or fortune but neither of these goals formed the main concern of her intent. Writing in a time characterized by increasing moral sensibility, issues of Parliamentary reform, economic change, the French Revolution, feminist issues, patriotic fervour and censorship, Wallace used her plays to participate in this milieu. Her feminist and political polemic, in particular, generated controversy, thereby creating obstacles in her career as a playwright, obstacles which reflect the on-going struggle of women in the theatrical establishment.

The nature of the theatre itself produced various obstacles for playwrights, for trying to get one's play produced was a difficult process for both men and women. The 1737 licensing act, restricting the production of "legitimate" drama to Covent Garden

and Drury Lane, narrowed the number of theatres where plays may be produced. Competition was also heightened among the playwrights since stage managers were reluctant to accept new plays because of the risk involved in mounting a new production. Furthermore, the personal preference of the stage managers was an important determinant. Thomas Harris, the manager of Covent Garden, was more willing to accept new plays, especially by proven dramatists. Thus Inchbald, who was commissioned to adapt Dumaniant's Guerre Ouverte, the same play Wallace translated as Diamond Cut Diamond, was given every encouragement. Her version was produced with the company's best comic actors.[3] In contrast, Drury Lane was influenced by its main proprietor, Sheridan, and by its acting-manager, John Kemble. Sheridan was only concerned with producing his own plays, while Kemble was inclined towards Shakespeare and, if not Shakespeare, then the established stock plays by Fletcher, Otway, Congreve, Cibber, Farquhar, and others (Hogan 1: clxviii). Acting casts also influenced the kinds of plays produced. Covent Garden was better represented in comedies because of its depth and talent in comedic actors. In tragedy, it could not compete with the likes of Kemble and his sister, the renowned Sarah Siddons. Thus Drury Lane became a stronghold for tragedy and the older, more established repertory.

Audience preference presented a different problem for playwrights. The rising middle class slowly changed the composition of the audience by the late eighteenth century. The "leisured ladies and gentlemen" of the upper class who constituted the Restoration audience are described as "sensual and uninhibited, brutal and tough-minded, cynical and healthily irreverent, utterly dishonest in public business and private affairs" (Rogers, Wycherley 25). This audience gave way to a rising "correctness of taste," an inclination for sensibility allied with moral prudishness.

Though it is difficult to determine the composition of the audience in terms of class structure and in relation to the growth of sensibility, Leo Hughes concludes that all levels of the populace were represented in the theatre and that sensibility was not class specific (155-57). He notes that as early as 1741, the ladies in the audience objected to the "vulgarity" of Ned Blunt in Behn's The Rover (127). In a 1776 revival of Wycherley's The Country Wife, Garrick altered the play to omit the character of Horner and changed the title to The Country Girl in order to fit the moral climate of the time (125). Thus this increasing preference for sentimentality and moral correctness effected an increase in the production of sentimental comedy.

Apparently the refined, moral sensibility of the public did not tolerate political and social satire. Many a prologue found it necessary to assure the audience that the play following was not concerned with politics or social reform. The prologue to Sophia Lee's The Chapter of Accidents, written by Colman, is typical:

> No temporary touches, no allusions
> To camps, reviews, and all our late confusions:
> No personal reflections, no sharp satire,
> But a mere chapter--from the book of Nature. (vii)

Inchbald's plays have been described as humanitarian comedies, for she deals with social issues such as poverty, domestic problems, vanity, corrupt libertinism, infidelity, thoughtlessness and cruelty, but the moral sentiment is often skilfully camouflaged with "excellent construction," complex plotlines and deftness in handling comic situations (Nicoll 144-51). In contrast, Wallace's intent "to lash the follies and vices of the day," in The Ton, is undisguised; the triumph of her female characters, the complete capitulation of the male characters and the call for reform are uncompromising in their condemnation of the leading social classes.

As noted by Allardyce Nicoll, "the audience of the late eighteenth century was characterized, as had been that of the preceding fifty years, by extreme political emotions" (17). Though the agitation for Parliamentary reform had begun in the 1750s, desiring a more "fair and equal" representation of the country, the effect of the French Revolution in 1789 intensified the debate by giving the reformers a new leverage. Basically, the reformers argued that "any government which did not respect national will as expressed through a truly representative legislative and was not established with the consent of the majority determined by a wide suffrage, was not to be endured" (Cone 99). Revolutionary France was held up as an example of England's future if "accumulated abuses" were allowed to continue; Parliamentary reform was seen as the only solution. Paine's The Rights of Man changed the face of reform by including the lower classes in his political doctrine. Evidently his work was effective, for in 1792 various reports of meetings, riots and demonstrations held by the lower classes fuelled the fear of the upper classes. The emergence of a working-class consciousness alarmed the higher orders. Also at this time, Thomas Hardy, a shoemaker, founded a reformist society which is credited with introducing the working class into political activity (Cone 119). He believed in establishing the rights of all men, giving them the right to vote. In reaction to these activities, fears and suspicions created a paranoid atmosphere in Parliament and in the upper classes. Anti-reformist sentiment organized quickly in unofficial groups such as the Association for the Preservation of Liberty and Property. The government also participated by taking legal action against individuals for spreading sedition. Though the theatre itself reflected little of the intense debates of the time, plays expressing sympathy towards French republicanism or criticism against British society or government were highly discouraged in the 1790s.

This intense political atmosphere is reflected in the public's taste in drama. Conolly states that playwrights from the mid 1790s to the early 1800s pandered to the patriotic fervour of their audiences, giving them every opportunity to express their loyalty to King, Lords and Commons (84). Any playwright suspected of being a republican or of being associated with republicanism found it very difficult to maintain a living. One example is Thomas Holcroft, who was forced to present many of his plays anonymously in order to receive an unprejudiced hearing. Holcroft was a member of certain reform-minded political societies but his plays were only "mildly political" (Conolly 84). Typical of many works of the time, his plays called for "humanitarian behaviour in the world"; they were critical of "aristocratic pride and arrogance [and] society's follies and corruptions" (84). The public, however, continued to condemn him as a republican. Inchbald's comedy, Every One Has His Fault (1793), was accused of sedition by the government newspaper, The True Briton. It disapproved of the play's reference to "high costs and scarcity of provisions in London," a sentiment which the newspaper believed reflected unfavourably on the government.[4]

In addition to censorship by the theatre-going public, John Larpent, the Examiner of Plays, was careful to prevent any kind of subversive or potentially subversive material from reaching the stage. Plays were considered dangerous if they contained comments against France or any of the countries allied or neutral with England, French aristocrats, the English government, and the aristocracy; or, if they discussed social-political issues such as the slave trade, Parliamentary reform, Catholic emancipation, and anti-establishment philosophies (Conolly 95). Richard Cumberland's play Richard the Second was one such case receiving Larpent's attention. Depicting the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, it included scenes of a murder of a

government tax collector, a popular uprising against established government and a people dissatisfied with their king (97). Conolly concludes that, in effect, sympathy is generated for the rebels instead of for the government. Not surprisingly, Richard the Second was refused a license: Cumberland was forced to revise the work which finally met Larpent's satisfaction as The Armorer (1793). But the new version bore no resemblance to the former; all politically sensitive material was either omitted or diluted (98).

For women playwrights, the above problems were compounded by gender prejudices. Though women playwrights had increased access to the theatre as the century progressed, the difficulties remained fairly consistent from the time of the Restoration. Women writers faced a contradictory argument: if they succeeded, they were accused of being "unfeminine"; or if they failed, it was attributed to their "weaker sex." Inextricably linked together, sex and ability formed a constant obstacle; accusations of "unchastity, madness and plagiarism" were often levelled at women writers (Pearson 7). During the Restoration, plays by Aphra Behn and Delariviere Manley were attacked simply because of their author's sex. Later in the century, Elizabeth Inchbald, for the most part, was able to avoid this kind of criticism, because she led a life free of scandal; she was known as much for her plays as for her virtue. Wallace herself was fairly fortunate to have received objective criticism of her plays. Yet, as the Critical Review shows, an underlying attitude of false, patronizing chivalry is present even in praise:

> That Criticism has smoothed his brows, and laid aside his severity, when a lady sues at his tribunal, confers more honour on his tenderness than his justice, and may add to his character as a gallant, at the expense of his impartiality. In reality, a literary woman is an Amazon,

> whom it is no disgrace to oppose in the field; for, when she assumes martial weapons, she must submit to the laws of war. Lady Wallace has, however, a claim to our compassion: she has been condemned unheard, or at least has been heard imperfectly; and while we would soften, if it were possible, the severity of the critical code, in favour of a lady, and an unfortunate one, we cannot silence the hisses of the theatre, nor can we condemn, on cool examination, the verdict of her jury. (May 1788)

Wallace was not so fortunate in the reception of her other works, being accused of "political doctoring," incompetence, and writing "nonsense." Others had to defend themselves against plagiarism: Sophia Lee felt it necessary to include a four-page preface, in her published edition of The Chapter of Accidents (1780), detailing the original conception of her work against charges of plagiarizing Diderot's Le Père de Famille. Women who were praised were usually "desexed"; they were given masculine or androgynous qualities. It appeared that the literary establishment could not cope with a successful woman writer as a woman; thus it argued that women writers were "very nearly men" (Pearson 9).

As Jacqueline Pearson points out, various tactics were used to deal with this prejudice (7). Prologues and epilogues often include a plea for special lenience because of the author's sex, thereby claiming an excuse for inexperience or incompetence. Charlotte Smith, a well established poet and novelist by the time she wrote her comedy, What is She (1799), expressed humility and self-effacement in her dedication. The prologue also unfavourably compares her to the god-like powers of the male playwright; because she is a woman, she is "less bold" and therefore cannot aspire to "raise the spectre, or direct the Storm." What is more interesting is the

suppression of Smith's identity at the time of production and publication, which is another tactic used to forestall biased responses. Other ploys include calling for support from women in the audience and making "polemical points" about the abilities of women to write. Even Inchbald, arguably the century's most successful woman playwright next to Behn and Centlivre, was forced to make conciliatory gestures. Many of her plays contain prologues referring to her past successes in order to legitimize her present offering, or they proffer an explanation of her ability to write which neutralizes the perceived threat to the predominantly male literary establishment in her sex. By contrast, Wallace adopts the "unfeminine" stance, refusing to apologize for her gender, her sentiments or her intent. In the Preface to The Fon, for example, she admits her inexperience in crafting plays but refuses to allow this to account for the hostile reaction of the audience.

As discussed above, the increasing moral sensibility of the audience led to an increase of sentimental works. One would suppose that the movement towards sentimentality would benefit women playwrights since feminine issues and the woman's point of view would be brought to the fore. Katherine M. Rogers argues that sentimentalism as a whole provided the "impetus toward feminism. By asserting the worth of feminine perceptions and values, it gave women confidence to express themselves and to claim emotional fulfilment" (Feminism 143). But she also points out that, particularly in drama, sentimentalism is often contrived to portray "tearful pictures of virtue in distress, edifying pictures of virtue conquering through self-abnegation, and a world in which benevolent feeling was stronger than moral law or physical fact" (120). These negative sentimental scenes were probably created to suit the audience. Pearson suggests that women members of the audience, in the early part of the eighteenth century, exerted some pressure on the theatres concerning the kinds

of plays they liked to see. They were inclined toward tragedies and comedies of sentiment, idealized female images and Shakespeare and serious drama; moreover, they were opposed to obscenity and insulting images of women, but paradoxically, they were also opposed to complex, believable and sympathetic portrayals of women, preferring the idealized portrayals instead (33-41).[5]

Many eighteenth-century critics and playwrights disapproved of this trend towards sentimental comedy but the audiences demanded such works. Inchbald's most successful play, Every One Has His Fault, utilizes a sentimental storyline where the heroine, Lady Eleanor, has been disowned by her father, Lord Norland, for marrying Captain Irwin, a commoner. The plot is accentuated with pathetic situations characterized by poverty, a long-lost son, and marital piety. The ending, of course, is a happy one: Lord Norland is reconciled with his daughter and son-in-law who, in turn, are reunited with their son.[6] Wallace also incorporates elements of sentimentality in The Ton, but not for artistic effect. Her portrayals of women in distress are coupled with a rationalist argument which illustrates the need for moral reform in fashionable, upper-class society. Audience reaction, according to her Preface, damned the play for "indecency."

Portrayals of women in distress often meant just that. Betty Rizzo suggests that Elizabeth Griffith's comedy, The Platonic Wife (1765), was "condemned for other reasons than for its structure"; based on the French sentimental story, "L'Heureux Divorce," it depicts a heroine who "is always independent, entertaining the propositions of three other men, does just as she likes, and in the end converts her husband to her own point of view" (127). It appears that women writers may have been better suited to express "feminine perceptions and values" but only if those sentiments were used to create characters possessing an inhuman capacity for

"passivity and patient suffering" (Pearson 62). Griffith compromised in her later plays and Inchbald complained, in an essay to The Artist (1807), two years after her retirement from the theatre, about the necessity of suppressing individual creativity and aesthetic standards to suit the tyrannical tastes of the audience and the government (16).[7] Wallace's last play, The Whim, was written without any regard for what was considered politically sensitive. Determined to expose the follies of the aristocracy and to evoke contempt for such activities, Wallace espoused a social-political polemic recognizing the lower classes as a legitimate, political voice. The play was censored by Larpent and, later, ridiculed by critics; Wallace was deemed a writer of "nonsense."

Thus the ordinary world of the theatre presented many challenges to women playwrights. But the problems were compounded by gender-based prejudices. The woman dramatist writing non-serious, non-threatening works which did not challenge the predominant values of society possessed a better chance of forging a career. Most of these women learned to compromise their own opinions; their female characters tend to be passive and self-sacrificing while social criticism is often mild, inoffensive or non-existent. The lack of a female dramatic tradition possibly also prevented more women from attempting careers as playwrights. In the Restoration, Mary Pix, Catherine Trotter and Delariviere Manley provided mutual support to one another, preserving their morale in the face of male hostility. The late eighteenth century lacked this female solidarity. The women who succeeded did so in comparative isolation. Inchbald was undoubtedly aided by her background as an actress; her familiarity with the workings of the theatre and with audience taste gave her a grounding in stage-craft. Moreover, her wide literary and social circles provided her with advice and encouragement. Sophia Lee's connections to the theatre also helped in getting her play staged; because her father was the actor John Lee, she not only had

knowledge of the workings of the theatre but also friends connected with the theatrical establishment. Eglinton Wallace, in many respects, is an unusual case. She had no background in the theatre but she saw the stage as a means of instigating and propagating social-political reform. Hoping to reach a larger audience in a more effective manner, Wallace decided to dramatize her views.[8] Uncompromising in her intent, each of her plays expresses contempt for what she saw as the fashionable, hypocritical values of the upper classes. Irresponsible social behaviour is seen by her as a destabilizing effect on society, leading to political chaos. The evils of sexual stereotyping, gambling, gallantry, coquetry, and class oppression form the themes of her works.

I intend, therefore, to examine in the following chapters each of Wallace's plays as a social-political polemic reflecting the ideological debates of her time. Chapter Two examines her first play, Diamond Cut Diamond which I see as an awkward attempt to inject a feminist argument into a typical sentimental comedy. Chapter Three examines the gender issues Wallace develops in The Ton. I argue that Wallace sees the oppression of women as being generated by the hypocritical values espoused by upper class society which places men in false positions of authority, leaving women to be devalued and victimized. Chapter Four examines her last play, The Whim, within the context of the political upheavals involving Parliamentary reform as Wallace creates a social-political polemic recognizing a legitimate voice of authority in the lower classes. Chapter Five is a summary of the previous chapters and discusses the contribution of Wallace to the dramatic canon.

Notes to Chapter One

1. "It has not been denied that the great mass of late eighteenth century plays make today but dull reading. Countless are the trivial farces where a fair Clarissa or a fairer Celia is about to be married to an odious Squire Badger or a detestable Sir George Trifle and where a faithful Townly or a fascinating Lovemore arrives disguised as serving-man or as country clown to rescue her from the hated toils. Countless are the artificial and absurd comic operas; countless the weary tragedies and the lachrymose comedies of the period" (Nicoll 1). Allardyce Nicoll goes on to lament the fall of tragedy and comedy which he attributes to changing audience taste and influence from the continent. In Chapter Three, he claims that many a "fine comedy" was ruined by "the intrusion of farcical elements" or by the "force of sentimentalism" which "frequently led comedy astray" (108-10).

2. Without recounting the arguments concerning the aesthetic standards of sentimental comedy, I will be using the term "sentimental" as it denotes a body of comedy, developed in the eighteenth century, containing events and characters which were designed to evoke sympathy and pathos. Perhaps it is best to define sentimental comedy by defining Restoration comedy: the intent of this comedy was to criticize the follies and vices of society, to show how contemptible and ridiculous such behaviour really was. It intended to show the "worldliness of society, to strip it of its disguises, and to exhibit the ridiculous contrast between its pretended respectability and its actual folly and vice" (Bernbaum 6). Sympathy was not expected for characters in distress; they were, instead, to appear amusing to their audiences. Thus punishments at the end of a play must appeal to scornful humour, not to fear or horror. Sentimental comedy, in contrast, acted on the basis that there were perfect individuals and that people could

be perfectible through an appeal to the emotions; it desired to rouse admiration for their virtues and pity for their sufferings (Bernbaum 10).

3. Translations were a popular commodity in the late eighteenth century where a successful play in Paris would soon appear on an English stage to entice its audiences. Wallace's Diamond Cut Diamond was not the only victim of this competitiveness; Inchbald's friend, Parkyns MacMahon had also translated a version of Guerre Ouverte (Boaden I:247-48). However Inchbald's version was staged first and though there was no law prohibiting a rival theatre from staging the same play after the original run had ended, an unofficial agreement was in operation: no production was to be performed at another playhouse until the original had been performed for two years (Hogan 1: exli) In a letter from Harris to Inchbald, the importance of staging a play before a rival is emphasised:

> I request as a favour that it may be produced with all possible dispatch. I have may urgent reasons for wishing it; not the least of which is, being satisfied that some one must lay hands on it and ruin it for our use. (Boaden I: 246)

4. Inchbald responded immediately in a letter published in The Diary. The letter is reproduced in Boaden's memoirs of Inchbald (I: 311). This is not Inchbald's first brush with censorship. An earlier play, The Massacre (1792) was sent to Harris but he declined to "so disagreeable a subject." Inchbald decided to publish it through John Robinson, but, upon the advice of Godwin, Holcroft and Robinson, she decided to withdraw it (Boaden 1: 303-04). The play was considered too controversial, for it depicts the recent massacres occurring in France; this would have exposed "republican horrors."

5. This complex relationship between sentimentality and feminism has been a point of contention for critics. Thus far, there is no in-depth study examining late eighteenth century sentimental comedy and feminism. Pearson deals with plays written up to 1737 and Rogers' discussion in Chapter 4 in Feminism centers mainly on the novels of Samuel Richardson and Frances Brooke. For general discussions on sentimental comedy, see Bernbaum, Mullan, Scherbo, Todd and Tompkins in the Works Consulted.

6. The ending scene, typical of the sentimental strain, features miraculous reformations and reconciliations. Consider the pathos worked into this scene featuring Lord Norland, Irwin and Lady Eleanor:

> *L. Norland.* [*Runs to Irwin, and embraces him*] My son! [*Irwin falls on his knees*] I take a share in all your offences--The worst of accomplices, while I impelled you to them.
>
> *Irwin.* [*On his knees*] I come to offer my returning reason; to offer my vows, that, while *that* reason continue, so long will I be penitent for the phrensy which put your life in danger.

L. Eleanor. [*Moving timidly to her Father, leading Edward by the hand*] I come to offer you this child, this affectionate child; who, in the midst of our caresses, droops his head and pines for your forgiveness. (V)

7. "The Novelist is a free agent. He lives in a land of liberty, whilst the Dramatic Writer exists but under a despotic government.--Passing over the subjection in which an author of plays is held by the Lord Chamberlain's office, and the degree of dependence which he has on his actors--he is the very slave of the audience. He must have their tastes and prejudices in view, not to correct, but to humour them. Some auditors of a theatre, like some aforesaid novel-readers, love to see that which they

have seen before; and originality, under the opprobrious name of innovation, might be fatal to a drama, where the will of such critic is the law, and execution instantly follows judgment" (*The Artist* 16).

8. Wallace's other works are social-political tracts: Letter to a Friend, with a Poem called the Ghost of Werter (1787); A Letter from Lady Wallace to Captain William Wallace, aid de camp to Colonel Maxwell, at Bangalore (1792); The Conduct of the King of Prussia and General Dumourier (1793); A Sermon Addressed to the People, Pointing Out the Only Sure Method to Obtain a Speedy Peace and Reform (1798).

Chapter Two Diamond Cut Diamond

Eglinton Wallace's first play Diamond Cut Diamond is a translation of Antoine-Jean Dumaniant's comedy Guerre Ouverte; ou, Ruse Contre Ruse.[1] His play, performed for seventy nights in Paris, was a suitable choice to satisfy the taste of the English audience for foreign plays. Translated by no less than three individuals, the only version succeeding to the stage was Elizabeth Inchbald's. Wallace, intending her own for production, "is said to have complained bitterly at being forestalled by Mrs. Inchbald" (Kinne 198-99). According to Boaden's memoirs of Inchbald, Wallace's complaint was an "idle" one since she had no exclusive right to Dumaniant's comedy; "besides she rendered it less entertaining by being more literal" (247). The Critical Review agrees, dismissing it as a literal translation of the original (June 1787). Despite Wallace's sentiments, her critics are justified in their assessment. The elements that made the original a success did not translate well into English, whereas Inchbald had altered the play to suit English tastes and manners. However, though Wallace followed the original closely, her emphasis on certain themes introduces her view of the stage. Writing not simply to amuse her audiences, she intended to reform them, a view which she elaborated upon in her next two plays. Diamond Cut Diamond, then, represents an awkward attempt to incorporate a social consciousness into a typical sentimental comedy. This results in a hybrid compounded of the original play's farcical aspects and Wallace's interest in feminist and social issues.

The play begins with the arrival of the Marquis to Plymouth where he is to claim his deceased uncle's estate. While there, he sees and falls passionately in love with Lucy. His servant Slyboots informs him that she is the niece of General Steady, a friend of thirty years standing with his late uncle. He also learns that Lucy has been promised to a sea Captain to whom she will soon be married. Accidently running into the General, the Marquis declares his love for Lucy, but is thwarted by the General's

promise to the Captain. Desperate, the Marquis offers to bet the General that he can persuade Lucy to his interests and win her for his wife. The General agrees, promising to sanction their marriage should he succeed, but upon two conditions: the Marquis is allowed only till midnight and he is not permitted to see Lucy except through his own means of ingenuity. The first skirmish is won by the Marquis who successfully converts Deborah, the General's housekeeper, to his side by tricking the General into believing her false. He also wins another round by meeting Lucy when he comes disguised as a mantua-maker to measure her for her wedding clothes. But the Marquis must defer to the genius of Betty, Slyboots' sweetheart and Lucy's maid, to devise a successful plan. After a few more failed schemes planned by the Marquis, Betty formulates a plan where the Marquis is to wait outside the garden wall, wait for her signal, clap in response to her song, climb over the wall and escort Lucy, who will be wearing male attire, back to his home before midnight. But Paddy exposes her scheme to the General who foils the plan by ordering his servants to escort the Marquis back to his own home. In the dark, the servants, mistaking Lucy for the Marquis, take her to the Marquis' home instead. The Marquis wins the bet and the General keeps his word.

The plot follows that of a typical sentimental comedy; it has the boy-meets-girl romance opposed by a tyrannical guardian, clever servants and the requisite happy ending. It also includes the themes common to sentimental comedy such as rebellion against arranged marriages, oppressive patriarchal authority and the reformed rake ready for marriage. Wallace retains this plot, but adds minor physical changes, moving the setting from Marseilles to Plymouth and giving the characters English names (Appendix I). Thematic changes, however, are more extensive. Wallace alters the play thematically in order to reinforce the moral of the play: it is useless to oppress a woman's inclinations. One of these changes is reflected in the use of the typical

device of contrasting town and country values, which is illustrated through the relationship between the Marquis and Slyboots. The Marquis, an industrious rake in London, exhibits mannerisms marked by the sophisticated indifference of town breeding:

> I am the most unfortunate creature alive! for my presence is now absolutely necessary at Plymouth. How I shall tire to death with these country bumpkins! Perhaps I shall be forced to vegitate [sic] with them a whole eternal month--A month out of London in the Ranelagh season!--Ah, Dieu! when one has known the charms of this delicious town, is it possible to exist in the country? (I.2)

Possessing the fatuous, French manner common to social pretenders, the Marquis discovers that behaviour in the country demands different standards. Discovering himself sincerely in love with a woman he barely knows, he must reform his past conduct with the opposite sex. According to Slyboots' testimony, the Marquis was fashionably frivolous in his love affairs:

> and if, as usual, you share your homage with several, oh may it please my stars that you chuse near neighbors at least, and not as in London, where you had a rage for having them at the opposite extremities of the town--and who suffered for that but Poor Slyboots--proposals--assignations--rumpuses--and presents--all was I made the Ambassador of--and it might have done very well if I had the wings of a Mercury, or even your Lordships *vis-à-vis*; but I was forced to trot on foot like a barber, and melted away proportionably; and was alternately scolded, kicked, caressed, d---d, and rewarded--O! my days all passed in this painfuly [sic] routine. (I.3)

Wallace portrays the Marquis as one of many shallow, rich young men living in an idle, useless fashion, oblivious to the true value of their rank. The country, in contrast, is somewhat different; nature, not artifice, is the norm. The character of Slyboots represents the more honest nature of country life; moreover, he possesses a moral standard which the Marquis lacks. The interaction between the two characters in this first scene reveals an inversion of status, undetermined by social rank. More outspoken than the general portrayal of servants, Slyboots is not a subservient buffoon. His speeches have a tone of criticism that exposes the Marquis' flawed behaviour. For instance, when the Marquis claims that he will stay in the country, Slyboots evinces surprise and describes him as a superficial gallant intent upon returning to the gaieties of London. He explains the difference between them; an explanation referring to the moral rather than to the class dissimilarity existing between master and servant:

> Aye, sir, they are not like yours, arising from a whim, a moment of caprice which has made me long for this journey. Allow me, my Lord, to tell you, I was impelled to it by love, the most delicate lively, generous passion; and you must know, that she whom I adore exists here. Three tedious years have elapsed since I saw the dear little rogue's face of my incomparable Betty; and I languish to lay my heart again at her feet--a heart that has escaped even the slightest scratch from all the Pollies and Lucies of London.
>
> *Marquis.* Oh, bravo, Slyboots; then we are both of us in the same situation. (I.3)

In contrast to the Marquis' behaviour, Slyboots has been faithful to Betty for three years, which is an accomplishment not to be underrated in the iniquities of London. His language verges on the eloquent instead of the vulgar, commonly seen in the lower

classes, nor does he speak in an artificial manner ornamented with empty rhetorical devices. The placement of the speech is also significant because it levels the Marquis to a lower degree than Slyboots. Despite his rank, the Marquis' moral character is judged to be of an inferior quality. The fact that Slyboots displays fidelity, honesty and higher motivation (love) suggests that the Marquis is to follow his lead. The last line by the Marquis refers to that inversion of status based on moral distinction.

In relation to the above is the suggestion that the Marquis must prove his worth in order to win Lucy. His rival, Captain Hardy is a hero who has "distinguished himself very much in the last war; the Gazettes speak highly of him--he sunk two of the enemy's ships, took a third; and the King has rewarded him handsomely" (I.9). Though he is never physically introduced into the play, the Captain presents a real threat to the Marquis. It seems that the standard qualifications for a suitor are redefined; title, estates, and wealth are desirable but they pale in comparison to deeds of merit. The man who proves useful to society either in public or private service is preferred. Conventionally, the playwright presents two suitors who are highly different, the hero is the one with genuine wit and feeling while the rival is a social pretender, a man of false wit, greed, shallowness, self-absorbed interests or some other such combination of flaws. In this case, Wallace offers a variation of the usual rivalry; both suitors are comparable, with the Captain holding a slight advantage. The Marquis offers youth, wealth, a peerage and *eclat*; but as the General points out, since "there is a number of rich fellows with titles in the world;...where is there any of them so estimable as a brave, honest officer?" (I.9).

The soliloquy by the Marquis paradoxically illustrates the sincerity in his passion and the shallowness he had possessed as a self-indulgent rake. Self-knowledge is something he must gain or he will fail to realize Lucy's worth. Wallace

presents an interesting reversal, portraying the Marquis as a commodity; instead of regarding the woman as chattel, the man must put himself in the woman's position. The Marquis' willingness to give Lucy a large jointure, enormous pin money, in short, his all, denotes a recognition of self-worth that extends to a recognition of her true value. Whereas his previous relationships were characterized by careless expenditures of money and energy, signifying a lack of concern for the responsibilities required by his status, this situation has forced him to take stock of himself and evaluate his worth in relation to her. The bet itself incorporates this new-found sense of self-worth, for it forces him to prove that a person of rank should be motivated by virtuous feelings. In contrast, the Captain has already achieved deeds of merit through public service. Wallace describes the Marquis' desperate manner as "revolutionary," for he must overthrow patriarchal authority which is responsible for perpetuating the custom of arranged marriages and for socializing the aristocracy to be idle gallants (I.6;7;11;12)

The Marquis' revolutionary fervour is aimed at General Steady. True to his name, he is a man who believes in honesty and merit (I.7). His choice of a husband for his niece is based upon his admiration for the Captain's actions: "and as I adore a brave fellow, I also wish to reward him; I had nothing so precious to offer him as my niece, and her I have proposed to him" (I.9). As to Lucy, he adopts a similar stance: because she is "so lively and droll...so quiet, sensible, and reserved with all" but him, he had decided to reward her with the Captain. In fact, the General appears to be contrary to the tyrannical, lust-ridden or greedy, over-aged guardians usually portrayed in comedy. However, it is his insistence on frankness, jollity and lack of ceremony which is his failing; more precisely, because the General's behaviour is solely determined by the appearances of others, he renders himself vulnerable to practising tyranny and to misconceptions. Thus the engagement between the Captain and Lucy is determined by

the Captain's reputation rather than by love between the two parties or by the General's personal knowledge of the Captain. The General's reaction upon first meeting the Marquis is also problematic; he bases his approval on questionable grounds: "the liking I had for you when a boy, the love I had for your uncle, and your countenance, all assure me, at first sight, that I shall like you wound'rous well" (I.8). If the General had knowledge of the Marquis' past, he would not be so ready to profess his friendship for a man he barely knows. Both suitors, then, are unknown qualities.

The General's behaviour also leads him to commit reprehensible mistakes. He believes that Deborah, his housekeeper and loyal servant, is guilty of treason because the Marquis made it appear to the General that she has accepted his bribe. Discounting her many years of service and his personal knowledge of her, he dismisses her with unjustified malicious rage:

> At your age, have you shame? You ought to blush; but I might have expected as much, when fool enough ever to trust a woman; but be assured I never really confided in you--no. It is twenty-five years since I have suspected you in my heart. Be gone, be gone, old Deborah, and never dare again to appear before me. (I.20)

The General, despite his good intentions, becomes a tyrant because his personal philosophy is based on a reward-punishment system that fails to account for human psychology.

Though the bet is a device used to oppose the custom of arranged marriages, it only reflects the Marquis' desires. Depersonalized and objectified, Lucy encapsulates the male perception of woman as a prize to be won. With the participation of Lucy and Betty, the emphasis changes. The Marquis and the General are relegated to the background in order to prove the moral of the play: "he that wishes to keep a woman

against her inclinations, attempts an impossibility" (II.58). Lucy has two important scenes. In the first, she humanizes her uncle's charge that a man of the Marquis' intentions is an offence to her sensibilities:

> Indeed I don't; and if a man be so taken with one, as to commit such a violence, he must love very desperately; and, oh la, it is so flattering to awaken a great passion!--one generally ends by sharing it. The heart once touched, the reason wanders speedily. (I.27)

Since love is often an unnecessary factor in determining compatibility in marriage, the Marquis presents a tempting choice. Moreover, because the General refuses to allow her to see the Marquis, her choice to marry the Captain has become an order, a tyrannical decree denying her the freedom to choose. Thus what appears as caprice on Lucy's part is a matter of principle. In the second scene, she makes a "treaty" with the General, which marks her entrance onto the "battlefield". The issue at stake is not whether Lucy loves the Marquis more than the Captain but, rather, it is a matter of allowing her to express her free will:

> *Gen.* So well that you are in love; is it not so?
>
> *Lucy.* No, indeed, I believe not, but then you know I cannot help being pleased with his violent eagerness--and of the two husbands, I confess I'd like him better than this fierce Captain. (II.35)

The majority of the feminist sentiments are expressed by Betty, the maid. Like Slyboots, whose role represents a moral standard, Betty is given various opportunities to show that the female genius is not to be dismissed. Set against male opponents who are guilty of tyrannizing women, Betty defeats the General, who is already shown to express a code of behaviour that is morally irresponsible, and Paddy, a loud-mouthed braggart who overestimates his own charms to the opposite sex. Thus her victories

represent an acknowledgement of female intelligence and independence. In her first scheme over the General, she praises the nature of women:

> Here is money loyally gained. Come, a worse General has more roguishly come by a larger sum.--Long live the women for presence of mind: they are always ready. But all is in finishing the affair as one ought; nothing now is so easy. We had no one to fear but Paddy, and he is fairly routed. I really admire my own abilities. With what pleasure I deceive this mighty General, who pays so well; but it is his own fault. Why does he think that he is as cunning as we women are? Why lock us up? Has he forgot how sweet forbidden fruit is? Oh, that is the irresistible spring of female inclinations. (II.43)

Because men insist on denying women the right to exercise their reason, women will invent ways in which to express their own will, whether that action is right or wrong. The need to overthrow tyranny supersedes the consequences of those actions. Thus female adultery is also attributed to the ungenerous and jealous behaviour of men:

> *Bet.* Oh! always be generous, and never jealous. Then you shall never have cause to complain.
>
> *Sly.* Are you sure of that?
>
> *Bet.* Yes; this is the only secret to prevent [*Pointing to her head.*] But these beasts of husbands won't make use of it.
>
> *Sly.* And so get made horned beasts.
>
> *Bet.* This is true--it is all their own faults. (II.47)

Betty's scheme to help the Marquis succeeds despite Paddy's interference. Because of her male attire, Lucy is taken to the hotel instead of the Marquis. The ending may be interpreted in two ways. First, if the Marquis wins the bet because of

Betty's ingenuity, then the moral is proven: female inclination cannot be oppressed due to the female genius. Second, if the plan has succeeded because of fate, then the oppression of female inclination is an unnatural act which Nature will correct. Either way, both readings support Wallace's intent. However, an obvious problem arises with the play; the attempt to incorporate a moral agenda, advocating social responsibility and female independence in, what is originally a very light comedy, results in a play mired in moral sententiousness.

Wallace appears not to have paid particular care to the construction of comic situations or to characterization. Excess dialogue such as the Marquis' soliloquy not only disrupts the comic pacing but is not consistent with the character of the English rake; his sentimental self-reflections possess a strain of melodrama instead of lively wit ready to handle any situation.[2] Moreover, dialogues between characters are drawn out, thereby affecting the intended mood of the scene. If we compare a scene from Wallace's play to the same scene in Inchbald's adaptation, the latter displays an economy of style which conveys the urgency of the situation:

> *Marquis.* Oh, I breathe again. Hide me, for God's sake, somewhere else, for there I cannot live one moment longer.
>
> *Betty.* Hide you! Yes, but where? No place here will be free from suspicion. But I suppose Paddy is in your plot.
>
> *Marquis.* Not he.
>
> *Betty.* It is, then, the Captain?
>
> *Marquis.* Still less him, I assure you.
>
> *Betty.* Who then?
>
> *Marquis.* It is old Deborah. She went and got hold of the Captain when he landed, and kept him on a false pretence that the General is in

> the country, and won't be back till tomorrow. We have cheated Paddy completely. (Wallace II.41)

In contrast, Inchbald's treatment of the same scene achieves a greater sense of panic:

> *Marquis.* Help me out.--[*She helps him.*] Oh! that's right--I breathe once more--Hide me somewhere instantly, for I should die if I was kept in that chest another moment.
>
> *Flora.* Where can I hide you?--we have no place where you will be safe, we are so watched--but Nicholas is in the plot I suppose?
>
> *Marquis.* No, no, he is not--it is the old duenna whom your master turned away this morning.--She went to Don Carlos, on board his vessel, the moment she heard he was arrived; and telling him the General was in the country, keeps him with the ship till to-morrow morning; and, in the mean time, she had my servant disguised and imposed him upon Nicolas (who came to the inn to inquire for Don Carlos) for Don Carlos himself. Nicholas in the plot!--no, no. (Inchbald II.i.91)

The comical urgency required in this scene is undermined in Wallace's version by the series of questions which Betty asks. This excess in dialogue succeeds in its original language because French has a quickness in tempo and rhythm which is lost in a literal translation into English. Moreover, the character of the Marquis is not quite English in character. In Inchbald's adaptation, the dialogue is kept short but the sense of panic is conveyed by the Marquis' use of "instantly" in his first speech and by the repeated "no" in his last. The character of the Marquis is also "more English" in that he is reminiscent of the Restoration rake, a type the audience would have found familiar; he

displays a certain amount of fatuousness coupled with self-confidence and a touch of arrogance which is not present in Wallace's Marquis.

Despite the problems of awkwardness in character and situation, Wallace's dramatization attempts to criticize the practise of arranged marriages which not only depersonalizes the individuals involved, but specifically denies women their rights to choose. In utilizing the device of the bet, Wallace shows that the need to act based on justified motivations is necessary. The Marquis' passion for Lucy and her intent to allow the Marquis to win are, therefore, revolutionary acts for they defy the established manner of thought.

The adaptation by Elizabeth Inchbald, The Midnight Hour, was performed at Covent Garden for ten nights with financial and critical success. Commissioned by Harris, the manager of the theatre, the play was presented as an afterpiece with the roles performed by the company's most experienced and popular actors and actresses (Appendix I).[3] Unlike Wallace who followed the original closely, Inchbald used her own experience as an actress and her familiarity with audience tastes in adapting foreign plays to suit English sensibilities while her treatment of situation and character retained the spirit of Dumaniant's comedy. Thematically, the play stays within conventional bounds. Inchbald's criticism of patriarchal authority, a common butt of the stage, is presented in a more conventional manner. She changes the Marquis' rival from a sea Captain to an old merchant, thereby emphasizing the incompatibility of the engagement:

> *Gen.* And you mean to encourage him?
>
> *Julia.* You know young people should be encouraged--and Don Carlos can much better bear a rejection; for he is old, and has been used, I dare say, to the sorrows and disappointments of the wicked world. (II.I.86)

Moreover, Julia is not given any choice in accepting Don Carlos whereas General Steady was not willing to force Lucy to marry the Captain if she disliked him. Also particular to many of Inchbald's plays is the role of money in courtship. Perhaps reflecting her own impoverished state during her marriage, Inchbald is careful to note that money is an important factor in establishing a successful marriage. In The Midnight Hour, General Don Guzman promises to give Julia and her fortune to the Marquis should he win their wager; in contrast, Wallace's Marquis offers to marry Lucy regardless of her financial state, thereby, inclining towards the sentiment: "love conquers all." Other differences include the absence of the Marquis' soliloquy so that the portrayal of the reformed rake is reminiscent of the Restoration type. Secondly, Inchbald omits any feminist sentiments; the bet between the Marquis and the General is simply a result of whimsical boasting by the former. They do not engage in a discussion of what constitutes a marriage nor do they discuss Julia's engagement as a form of oppression. Furthermore, Flora, Julia's maid and Betty's counterpart, devises the successful scheme uniting her mistress and the Marquis, but she is not given feminist statements praising female intelligence, inclination and superiority. As a result, Inchbald's adaptation retains the original spirit of Dumaniant's comedy; it is a unified play showing consistent comic action and characterization with a subtle strain of social criticism. The Midnight Hour does not suffer from the confusion of purpose evident in Diamond Cut Diamond.

Wallace's Diamond Cut Diamond was not written merely to amuse, a view which she took seriously later on in her career. Showing a concern for a system that judges individuals according to appearances, she voices a need to reform such conceptions. The nobility should be judged on merit, not by status or wealth. Wallace also saw a need for women to express their free will in the issue of marriage. The

consequences of perpetuating a patriarchal system leads to social instability because marriages will be formed out of indifference instead of love. Though the play clearly possesses limitations in dramatizing the full extent of her social criticism, it is an attempt to develop a moral argument against the conventional problems resulting from gallantry and arranged marriages. However, in her next effort, Wallace expands upon the idea of female independence, exploring social attitudes towards female identity and sexuality. She continues her criticism against the indolent behaviour of the aristocracy, combining the two to form a unified doctrine of reform.

Notes to Chapter Two

1. Antoine-Jean Bourlin, known as Dumaniant (1752-1828), was variously a lawyer, comedian, dramatic author, manager of Porte Saint-Martin and various provincial theatres. He wrote only five plays in which Guerre Ouverte is not an original; the plot is indebted to Morello (Kinne 197).

2. By melodrama, I am referring to the Marquis' excess of artificial sentimentality which is contrary to the typical portrayal of the English rake.

3. In a letter to Inchbald, Harris emphasizes the importance of staging and typecasting:

> The business appears to me as clear as need be, and I have no doubt you find it so. I am satisfied that you, Lewis and Richards, (whom I would have you immediately consult,) will form the last scene, so as to make the business striking, and the general effect excellent....Above all things, it is essential to us to get Lewis to do the Marquis; and I think Mrs. Wells should do Julia. The piece will then be admirably acted, and, I doubt not, will succeed capitally. (Boaden 1:246)

William Lewis (1746-1803) was the principal comedic actor and acting manager (1782-1803) at Covent Garden who specialized in playing "fashionable and flippant" characters (Highfill). Mary Wells (1762-1809) was known for her beauty and for playing innocent, young characters (Highfill). At the height of her career, she was well admired for her ability to play both comedic and tragic roles.

Chapter Three The Ton; or, The Follies of Fashion

Wallace's next attempt for the stage was an original comedy in five acts, The Ton; or The Follies of Fashion. Produced at Covent Garden, the three performance-run was surrounded by controversy. In the Preface to the printed edition, Wallace claims that her play was not given a fair hearing because certain special interest groups "took *every* step which rage or malice could dictate, to prevent the mirror from being placed before them" (i). Her topic in this second work extends and develops the theme of female independence, touched upon in Diamond Cut Diamond. Focussing on male coquetry in the upper classes, Wallace makes a strong critical attack on the sexual double standard, the inferior status of women and the self-destructive philosophy of a society that insists on valuing appearances over reality. The title of the play, The Ton, refers to this fashionable society whose crippling system of values and behaviour denies women their self-respect, their individuality and their claim to equality and compassion. However, women are not the only victims; in such a society, where men are conditioned to be gallants, men are given false positions of authority. Believing that they are in control of social and sexual relationships, men are, in reality, leaving themselves vulnerable to the evils of profligate behaviour. Even the most well-adjusted man is a potential tyrant. Marriage and love, conventionally associated with constraint and imprisonment, truly become so in the spurious freedom of the ton; relationships based on trust, respect and empathy are put forth as the true values of a stable society. Wallace develops these themes through the narratives of five women, each of whom represents an aspect of female experience as a victim of male tyranny.[1]

The play opens with a conversation between two servants--Trusty, steward to Lady Clairville, and Mademoiselle, governess to Julia Raymond. They reveal that Lord Ormond, engaged to Lady Clairville, has just proposed to Julia, who had been taken out of school to attend the recent wedding of her brother Lord Raymond. He has

just married a *cit*, whose mother is of aristocratic birth but whose father is a middle-class citizen. Lady Raymond, known for her virtue and for her fortune, expects to enjoy the companionship of her husband, but she is advised by her new social set, consisting of the Bontons, MacPharo, Captain Daffodil, and her husband, to divest herself of domestic feelings and to enjoy her married life in flirting with other gallants. MacPharo, an Irish mercenary paid in money and sex, and Daffodil, a Foppling Flutter type whose only concern is his reputation, eagerly try their charms on her. Lady Raymond learns of her husband's penchant for gambling and of the poverty of his ex-mistress, Clara. Determined to make amends and unknown to Raymond, she supplies him with money through his moneylender and she meets with Clara who had been falsely seduced by her husband. But this meeting is complicated by the presence of Bonton who lusts after Clara and by Daffodil who desires to be seen with Lady Raymond so as to add to his reputation. Lord Raymond increases the confusion when he is maliciously set up by a note from the pretender to virtue, Mrs. Tender, telling him of an assignation between his wife and her lover at Clara's lodgings. Falsely accused by Raymond of infidelity, Lady Raymond leaves, disdaining to defend herself. Lord Bonton and Clara enlighten Raymond as to the virtue of his wife's intentions and rebuke him with his own behaviour. Reformed, Raymond quits his gaming, learns from Levy that MacPharo had been placing him in deeper debt, which his wife has cleared, and reconciles with his wife by accepting full blame for the troubles he alone has caused. In the meantime, Lady Clairville attempts to settle matters with Ormond, but discovers that he really is to marry Julia Raymond. However, Julia flees to a convent, for her conscience will not allow her to marry a man who loves another nor to destroy the "repose" of Lady Clairville. Ormond reveals to Lady Clairville that he had seduced Julia while in a state of drunkenness, but in remorse, he had promised to

marry Julia as a means of saving her honour. The end of the play sees the dismissal of Daffodil, Mrs. Tender and MacPharo and the happy reconciliations of the Raymonds, Lady Clairville and Ormond, and the Bontons.

Despite a respectable run of three performances, The Ton was not a financial and critical success.[2] The Monthly Review charges that the characters are weakly drawn, there are too many minor incidents without a main interest, and "moral sentences and sentimental talk will not constitute a comedy" (May 1788). The Critical Review agrees:

> If we were to examine this play critically, we should observe, that the conversations were too numerous in proportion to the incidents; that they had little influence on the events, and often were not connected with them; that time was frequently violated; and that the most comic situations had lost their influence, from familiarity. (May 1788)

Both papers conclude that the play is uninteresting for a comedy, which they judge to be the reason for its failure. A half-century later, in Some Account of the English Stage from the Restoration in 1660 to 1830, John Genest also claims that the play is "very dull," for nearly the whole of it is "mere conversation" (VI: 494-95). Wallace, however, accuses the parties of "Daffodils, MacPharos, and Lord Bontons of the day" for sabotaging the play with accusations of indecencies because they feared to see themselves exposed to the public. The above critics are politely inclined to dismiss her argument, correctly pointing to her own lack of stage-craft for the play's failure. Wallace admits her inexperience, but maintains the notion of malevolent party interest. Judging the play with a twentieth-century perspective, the work is stiff with excess dialogue; there is a lack of comic pacing, situation and wit, the characters, tending to type, lack the force required to execute a comic situation. These dramatic

shortcomings, however, appear to be a sacrifice for ideological necessity. Wallace's satire on male coquetry is developed through the thematically interconnecting lives of five women which form a continuous narrative documenting the female experience in a patriarchal society. It depicts the consequences of living in a society which purports to liberate both men and women from sexual, social and political oppression while actually demeaning and dehumanizing its members.

Though Julia Raymond is never physically introduced into the play, her narrative represents the initiation into womanhood under a patriarchal society. Described as a young girl of not yet fifteen, she has been brought out of her fashionable school to attend her brother's wedding. Guided by an inadequate education which had focussed on dancing, music, manners and dress, and by a French governess determined to indoctrinate her pupil in the philosophy of the ton, Julia is easily seduced by Ormond who then promises to marry her. In reality, such a match is more than desirable; for a young girl with a small fortune, marriage to a suitor with wealth and status is ideal. Moreover, a woman was expected to accept the first offer given to her in fear no other offers were forthcoming; therefore a man with a respectable income and a "semi-decent" character was viewed as a "catch" (Rogers 11). In this case, Julia's engagement to Ormond is a stunning coup. Yet, despite her education and the influence of the ton around her, Julia's sense of virtue, previously nurtured in her by a loving parent, prevents her from marrying Ormond who is in love with another woman. She flees to a convent, leaving Ormond to marry Lady Clairville.

Julia's fate appears no different from the stereotypical "fallen woman"; this is the woman who loses her chastity (the circumstances in which this occurs are irrelevant) and either regains her "innocence" after experiencing some form of

punishment and penitence, or is killed (Pearson 43-5). In contrast, the virtuous woman is the one who practises self-sacrifice and self-criticism. Wallace redefines the "fallen woman" syndrome by attributing Julia's "demise" to a faulty education and to a recognition of self-hood expanding into a universal female empathy. Throughout the narrative, Wallace stresses the ills of Julia's education as the source of misery:

> *Ormond.* ...that heart had been guarded by a fond parent, directing her infant steps from folly, and seconding that love of virtue, which nature implanted in her bosom, but which the errors of education have rendered a source of misery, that, from the very morning of her days, has obscured every hope of happiness. (V.i.81)

Because Julia has been educated at a school "where only accomplishments to attract men are taught:--and those principles totally neglected which alone can enable them to guard against [men's] profligate attacks", her "innocence" has been untainted (II.iv.40). Despite the insistence upon Julia as an innocent victim, she is relegated to the fate of a nun:

> *Villiers.* (She said) She'd be consoled by thinking, that in renouncing the world she secures your peace--and vowed that every prayer, which she addressed to the Deity, to whom she dedicated her future days, should implore blessings on Ormond and Augusta. (V.i.83)

Such a resolution seems unfair and contrary to the feminist stance Wallace adopts and applies to her female characters.

To consider how Julia's fate is to be regarded, the manner in which Ormond's actions are censured must be considered. Throughout the play, the emphasis on Julia's guiltlessness is repeated and supported by Ormond's condemnation of himself and by

Villiers' critical view of Ormond. Ormond admits that he is a villain and accepts full responsibility for a situation for which he has no reasonable explanation:

> Freely I own, and severely repent my crime. Gracious Providence! Did I ever think I could so far forget myself as to be such a villain! (V.i.82)

More important is the view of Villiers, a minor character and the only man in the play not involved with gallantry or intrigues. Because he functions as a "harmony" element, his condemnation of Ormond contextualizes the severity of Julia's decision to enter a convent:

> Ormond! Ormond! Why did you render such an innocent *thus wretched*, when the world is filled with willing wantons? (V.i.82)

Wallace's use of "innocence" in the above context dissociates the term from its conventional meaning of chastity. It is redefined to include integrity, honesty, and courage as well as chastity. This is illustrated by Julia's refusal to celebrate her triumph in "stealing" Ormond away from Lady Clairville. Instead, she describes herself as being "ruined," (I.iv.28-9); but she does not consider herself ruined until she hears that Ormond had given up Lady Clairville for her. Therefore, the conventional sense of the term "ruined" seems not to refer to a loss of sexual innocence. What is emphasized is the violation of integrity. The implication, then, is that Julia's self-imposed exile is for the sake of her own conscience and for the sake of Lady Clairville.[3]

Another problem with Julia's narrative is the issue of education. Though her situation is blamed on an education where women are given impractical training in subjects which leave them incapable of running a household or of being a sensible companion, several conversations between Ormond and Villiers cite male gallantry as the result of female education:

> *Villiers.* It is true:--and were the principles of females studied half as much as their persons, we should be able to find interesting sensible companions in our wives;--have fewer divorces--and our young men be less devoted to the follies of St. James's Street.... (II.iv.41)

A question is raised: did male gallantry shape female education to produce coquettes or did coquettes shape men into gallants? It is strange that Wallace introduces this ambivalence when it is clear in the other cases that women are vulnerable to the gallantry of men because of the pervasive attitude that devalues women.

Lady Augusta Clairville represents the next stage in women's experience under patriarchy; unlike Julia, she has weathered the dangers of girlhood and is on the verge of matrimony with someone compatible in fortune, status, virtue and love. In many ways, she resembles the sentimental heroine who is required to suffer passively in a misunderstanding with her lover. But the difference lies in the manner in which she suffers and the sense of self-respect she commands. As the "rival" of Julia Raymond, Augusta Clairville is described as the "loveliest, worthiest lady in England" (I,i.2) with "every perfection, good sense, rectitude of heart and manners can form" (II.iv.41). Despite her virtue, her situation is completely dependent upon Ormond's honour. Because of his devotion to his honour, he has unwittingly created two victims of two unsuspecting women. His strange manner prompts her to suspect that he has taken up gaming, a vice common to all men. The money she sends to alleviate his "debt" is a noble gesture of generosity, since money is the one factor determining independence for women in this society. Undermining her generosity is Ormond himself. Known for his unfashionable ways, he is deemed the personification of honour itself:

> *Lady Bonton.* ...he don't distinguish himself with the plumes of fashion--he don't lose money at the clubs--has never yet had address

> enough to get the credit of an affair with a friend's wife--never sported a new fashion--or even a mistress in a splendid *vis-a-vis*. I don't believe the vulgar wretch is even in debt; and let a man be every thing, charming and clever, if he don't signalize himself in the annals of Fashion--lord! one is asham'd to be seen talking to him. (III.ii.48)

Yet his constant guard over his honour is lost on a drunken dare to seduce Julia Raymond whom he proposes to marry because his "honour" demands the reparation of her injury. Fighting against such an illogical abstraction, Lady Clairville becomes the indirect victim of his honour. Through no action of her own, she is still left vulnerable to deal with Ormond's thoughtless behaviour. But unlike the general run of sentimental heroines, such as Steele's Indiana who willingly suffers the consequences of Belvil's extreme sense of filial piety, Lady Clairville has an understanding of woman's status in society.

In a conversation with Lady Raymond, she reveals an ironic understanding of men:

> *L. Raymond.* Alas, my dear, I fear that my Lord loves me not.--I begin to fancy my hopes of happiness a delusive dream.
>
> *L. Clairville.* Why suppose it, my dear? When you do meet, he is never unkind.--But he, you know, is a hero of St. James's street.
>
> *L.R.* This thing, Daffodil says, that he has a mistress; and it is but too evident, that he is afraid, or ashamed of being seen with me.
>
> *L.C.* Because, my dear, fools would laugh at him;--and many wise men cannot brook ridicule.

L.R. Should I express a wish for his company, which in you, Lady Bonton, or perhaps even this mistress, would please him, from me would fret him sadly.

L.C. You are yet to learn the follies and weakness which degrade the lords of the creation; should a mistress command one of them to give up for her his dearest pleasure, he would.

L.R. But a wife is ever suspected of having a plot on the reins of government;--and that man would hide his head, ashamed if but suspected of giving into the hands of a woman of family, honor, and education, one particle of that power--

L.C. Which he would glory in consigning to an ignorant, low-bred profligate who laughs at her dupe, with half the young fellows in town.

L.R. I must endeavor to tempt my lov'd Lord from this vice of gaming;--as to his amouretts, I care for no caprice of *that* sort,--that will not rob me of his protection, which I shall ever study to merit, by good humour, and every endeavor to make home agreeable to him; which may steal him from himself, and tho' no courtier bred, I trust that my fond wishes to please him, may one day interest his heart.

L.C. I sincerely hope you may succeed in taming your wild mate;--it is a most difficult task, for they look upon us poor women, as only fit to be fools, or fooled.

L.R. My Lord has lost a large sum, and that, I dare say, frets him. I'll go to my father, and implore him to advance me part of my fortune;--he so fondly values my happiness, that I am sure he will. I shall get it conveyed to my Lord, without his knowing that it comes from *me*.

L..C. I approve of your not letting him know it is you who assists him;--for even such liberality in a wife, would displease ungenerous man, who hates to owe them any obligation.

L..R. He has applied to Levy for the money, and I mean that *he* shall give it him.--I must go to his house--don't you think that I am very bold to venture?

L..C. Oh, you are in no danger--Ben Levy, I fancy, has no inclination to lay violent hands on *any* thing, but sterling monies, or to admire any face but that of his Majesty,--in truth, my dear, I sincerely feel for you; for gay men look upon us as only a species of game which they take pleasure in decoying to destroy. Yet, they expect from us, the most perfect rectitude in all our intercourse with them.

L..C. No wonder so many innocent females have wounded reputations, when at the mercy of those wretches, who glory in defaming them.

L..R. Thank Heav'n, the law allows damages for us wives being defam'd, but the unmarried are sadly exposed; it is a pity there were not coroners appointed to examine what reputations are basely murder'd, and which of them die a natural death.

L..C. Who knows, but we one day may see such a law made, now that we have so able a lawyer at the bar as the benevolent, eloquent Erskine;--whose delicate feelings of honor, and disinterested generosity, are ever solicitous to enforce justice and right, even where he finds the laws are deficient:--but my dear, your case only requires that your feelings should not be too much engag'd. (II.iii.32-4)

Lady Clairville's understanding of the sexual double standard gives her a strong sense of self-respect since she has no illusions as to the inequalities between the sexes.

Instead of passively accepting whatever ills await her, however,she takes the initiative. Reacting to the suspicion that Ormond is gambling, she is willing to give up her fortune to pay his debts, but she is not willing to include herself as a part of the solution:

> Has he lost money?--If so, my fortune has no charms for *me*.--Happy with my Ormond--I'll be content--let him take my all--Sixty thousand, I trust, will clear his debts--and I should pass a solitary life, satisfyed in having made happy the man, who so perfectly merits to be so.--(III.iii.53)

One can argue against the sacrifice of her fortune for a man who is senseless enough to ruin himself with gambling, yet her willingness to give denotes an individual choice; moreover, she refuses to include herself in the gesture, refusing to adopt the sentimental motto, "love conquers all." In a similar vein, when the incomplete truth of Ormond's situation is revealed, she refuses to forgive and accept the circumstances:

> If so, he's dead to me for ever--for, so firmly did I revere his truth and honor:--destroy but these, and every feeling of partiality is changed to cold contempt....
>
> My heart is not formed for reproach--Oh, may he never know its value!--else I shall be too much avenged--it is even generous enough to wish him happy:--for the object who has so totally forfeited my esteem, can never awaken in my bosom any emotion:--not even that of resentment.--My tears may flow, to think that I have made such an

> ingrate--but my soul must ever exult in that probity, which has alone rendered my heart a bleeding victim to his perfidy! (III.iii.54-55)

Her anger at Ormond indicates a strong sense of self-respect and self-identity. She refuses to sacrifice herself for a man who fails to *merit* her value which she judges to be worthy.

The reconciliation between Clairville and Ormond is perhaps the weakest part of this narrative. During the masquerade ball, Ormond, in disguise, reveals the complete story. He exonerates himself from the charge of perfidy and villainy, for he had never betrayed his love to Clairville. The agreement to marry Julia Raymond was a means of repairing the insult of seduction; therefore, in marrying Julia, he would render himself miserable by willingly allowing Clairville to believe him a villain. In this manner, Clairville would be able to forget him and accept the pain of a supposed betrayal. Unfortunately, Wallace's intent to make these actions appear honourable and satisfying fails. Instead of looking like a hero, Ormond appears like a thoughtless hypocrite and Clairville's acceptance of his behaviour contradicts her earlier strength of defiance. Yet, if the resolution is taken in the context of the theme of female empathy, which is developed throughout the play, then Ormond's behaviour can be understood. As Julia had left for a life in a convent to ensure Lady Clairville's happiness, Lady Clairville is happy for Ormond's attempt to save the honour of Julia even though he had caused her great anxiety and anger. Her reaction to his implausible story underlines the compassion demanded of women for women:

> Oh! I'd deify his manly resolution, which enabled him generously to forfeit his mistress's esteem and his own happiness, *rather than publish the dishonour of this unfortunate!* (V.iv.95; my emphasis)

In a society where love in marriage is unnecessary or neglected, compassion and generosity have increased value. Ormond's willingness to forget his own happiness in order to secure the happiness of Julia is deemed a worthy, generous humane action. Women are expected to extend compassion to women because they are too often the victims. Thus Lady Clairville's forgiveness of Ormond, hard to accept by twentieth-century perspectives, is morally right. According to Julia's governess, Mademoiselle, Lady Clairville should immediately find herself another lover since "great men be frivole, dey chuse from caprice, and change wit the wind--and laugh at de loveliest de wordiest, and all dat sort of ting" (I.i.2). Though Ormond is not a man of ton, he is certainly an example of how a virtuous man may sink to the vices of the ton and unwittingly cause pain for his one true love. Love, virtue and compatibility are not infallible guards against the ton because society discredits such qualities.

Lady Fanny Raymond, forming the main narrative of the play, represents the newly married woman. She enters that phase expected of all women, but unlike the majority, she marries her choice of husband for love. Also unusual is her background. Lady Raymond is the daughter of a woman of quality and a citizen. Considered a cit by the ton, she has been raised as a gentlewoman but with the sober middle-class values of the common citizens. Straddling the boundaries of both spheres, Lady Raymond is a hybrid of sorts, completely belonging neither to the foppish ton, nor to the money-obsessed middle class. This places her in the unique position of the "other," an outsider able to see the worst of both classes but also able to put together the best of both within herself. Like Lady Clairville, Fanny Raymond is known for virtue, a reputation open to assault by all the gallants who cannot resist such a prey. Again, like her counterpart, she discovers that virtue and compassion are not enough to ward off the corruptive effects of the ton. Expecting a natural marriage of loving

companionship, she is neglected by Raymond, encouraged to play the coquette, and advised to divest herself of all feelings because a loving marriage is a chimera:

> *Lady Bonton.* So says every fond fair in the honey moon. Perhaps your Lord may turn out a phoenix; but they are singular productions.--I have lived long enough in the beau monde to be convinced that we should deaden our feelings as much as we can, and substitute the pleasures of dissipation for that domestic comfort, which is seldom or never realized--Submit to me, and I will teach you. (I.iii.14)

Resisting the ton, Fanny concludes that her self-esteem and self-respect are more important than mindless flirting or self-sacrifice:

> I shall never have any thing to reproach myself with; and that feeling will supply me every comfort; it will cheer my saddest moments of disappointment, and guard each lively sally of my sportive mind. (IV.ii.69-70)

On a more practical level, she is not unmindful of the legal consequences:

> When I tried to express an intention of coquetting, he felt it not--perhaps, should I really try it--but no,--that were more ungenerous than to be really guilty, I should equally forfeit his esteem, and destroy his quiet, *yet give him no possible chance to get rid of me.* A woman, if seduced by passion, is surely less depraved than the wife that only appears to do so, to teize her husband. (III.ii.47; my emphasis)

By law, at that time, a woman could sue her husband for separation or divorce on the grounds of adultery. The success rate for women obtaining divorces from their husbands was low but if her reputation was "spotless," she might be eligible to receive a maintenance. An adulterous wife suing for divorce against an adulterous husband

was usually prevented from retaining any property that should have been considered hers (Rogers 9). Legally and morally, Fanny is justified in her conclusions; Wallace is not excusing passivity or adultery, but rather pointing out the fact that the ton forces women either to commit adultery or to participate in follies because of neglectful husbands. They must either find love elsewhere or suppress their feelings and become "actresses" of the ton. What Wallace offers is an understanding of the motivation behind behaviour previously accused as depraved. As in Diamond Cut Diamond, then, men are therefore judged largely responsible for their own cuckoldry.

Thus Lady Raymond's reaction to her husband's mistress, Clara, is unsurprising. Instead of condemning the lustful behaviour of a fallen woman, she sympathizes with this unknown woman, who "must not be thus driven by fortune" (III.ii.49). Instead, Fanny condemns ungenerous men: "they look on us, poor unfortunate females, as devoted victims to their vanity and perfidy, and repaid for ruined peace and honor, by that tenderness which tortures and undoes us" (III.iii.49-50). She fights against the male-perpetuated stereotype of soft, feminine sensibility and passivity, unsupported by common sense and virtue. Through Lady Raymond, Wallace is redefining female honour to include compassion, generosity and empathy as well as chastity. Female honour can no more be dependent upon a woman's reputation as female reputation can be dependent upon male honour. After hearing Clara's story, Lady Raymond gives judgement: she concludes that "such generosity of sentiment has proved your ruin and I trust will restore you to honor and peace" (IV.iii.74). Going against the conventional type where the fallen woman is required to suffer or die, Wallace claims that the issue of female ruin is not black or white. Through sensibility and financial necessity was Clara "ruined," and even such a situation is not "irredeemable." Clara is restored to "honor and peace," meaning that she was never ruined at all since sexual ruin is only a

figment of man's sexual double standard. In a case like this, Raymond's pretense of generosity must be taken into account. Moreover, men are not the only ones at fault; following in their footsteps are the women who could help relieve the distresses of those in poverty if they contributed their time and money to charities instead of to gaming (IV.iii.73).

Lady Raymond's act of charity is, ironically, vulnerable to the same corruptive behaviour of men. Despite her virtue, she is accused by her husband of adultery:

> Your Ladyship has indeed soon perfected yourself in modern manners; soon adopted the vices of the Ton--and with a fool too: oh, damnation! what depravity it shews! (IV.iii.77)

In response, she displays cold contempt against such hypocrisy:

> And dare you suspect my honor? had you, My Lord, been as careful of your own, I had not been forced to this concealment. Those gentlemen's appearance astonish [sic] me more than it can you--but all explanations are beneath me, when thus accused. (IV.iii.78)

Unlike the wilting sentimental heroine, Lady Raymond refuses to explain her conduct to a man who has always betrayed his own honour. Their reconciliation scene reveals defiance on her part and complete repentance on his. Her monologue illustrates a strong criticism of the ton and a sense of self-worth:

> How completely wretched am I! Why, why did I marry the man I fondly loved? Hard--hard is *her* fate, who is forced to despise the object of her fond affection! Who forfeits her confidence! loads her with unjust suspicions, renders her the jest of his merciless sex; and insulted by the scorn of those of her own, who know not half *her purity and truth!* Yet, alas! how well have I *justified* this insult: Oh! till now, I

> never thought it requires even more the *appearance* of virtue in *society*, than in *reality*! Yet, the open, honest heart, never thinks thus till it is too late. (V.iii.90)

Not blaming herself for Raymond's faults, Lady Raymond adopts a battling stance. The last lines reveal an ironic understanding of the society she has married into. Appearances and reputation are valued more than real virtue and honour; in behaving as she really is, she is vulnerable to the innuendoes and gallantry of the ton. Fittingly, her husband repents of his ways; he has learned to value her as a person, and to share his "reins of power." For if he had listened to his wife, he would not have put himself in debt to MacPharo. Thus Lady Raymond represents what are supposedly the natural desires of any woman; she only desires the chance to be with her husband in companionship, enjoying the gay life together. Furthermore, she illustrates the point that a woman is not an inferior being, a toy to a husband, virtuous at all times. A wife is to have equal share of the power, to be trusted with important matters, to be seen as an adviser.

Lady Bonton represents the next phase: the married woman who is driven to the follies of the ton because it is the only alternative to tolerating marriage with an indifferent husband. Unlike Lady Raymond, Lady Bonton is one of the many who find it easier to embrace the ton than to endure the dissipations of a neglectful husband Influenced and coerced by the dominant values of the hegemonic group, Lady Bonton has been persuaded to believe that a happy, domestic marriage is impossible. She counsels Lady Raymond to do likewise:

> I vow my dear, you must adopt its system; for if you persist in your hideous sentimentals, you'll tire every body à la mort.--Every man will regret that he is not your husband, that he may be at liberty to shun

> you --I protest I get--[*yawns*] such a dose whenever I see you, that I can't adjust my dimples, and *enjoument* for an hour. (II.i.30)

Dimpling her cheeks and pretending enjoyment forms the education of the married woman. she must learn to act "not like an actress to *feign* feelings, but to appear in the beau monde totally divested of them" (IV.ii.65). Her marriage with Lord Bonton is fashionably ideal. They never see each other and each can do as s he pleases. Lady Bonton boasts that she sees less of her husband than any woman while Lord Bonton is proud of the fact that he cannot stand being near his wife though he loves her dearly.

Lady Bonton believes that by adopting the ton she has absolute power, but in reality, it is only her husband who has power. He is free to pursue Raymond's ex-mistress, Clara, while Lady Bonton, known as the "empress of whim and dissipation" has "all the scandal of lovers for nothing at all" (I.ii.10). In essence, it is an empty marriage of *rouge*, dimples, faro-tables, *petit-soupérs*, *enjouement* and *chasse-ennui*.

Though Wallace portrays Lady Bonton as an ideal woman of the ton, she shows that women are conditioned to be so. For Lady Bonton is not lacking empathy or understanding for those who also partake in the ton. In response to Mrs. Tender's general criticism of all "vile women" and all men as "dubious characters and profligate" monsters, she makes allowances:

> Perhaps you mean to be severe, Mrs. Tender, but I an't asham'd to be taxed with the concealing the follies of my own sex; for no character I so much detest as that malevolent one which is ever on the fret to destroy the confidence of the married, and the reputation of the single. (IV.ii.68)
>
> These are illiberal prejudices, which embitter all the comforts of life. (I.iv.16)

Instead of triumphing over those of her own sex, she displays an understanding of woman's situation. Nor does Wallace intend to condemn her for her activities. Since reputations are vulnerable to slander, they are not to be accepted at face value, a fact which Lady Bonton knows quite well as a member of the ton herself. Thus Lady Bonton represents the majority of married women who are forced to suppress their natural emotions and to participate in the ton; to them, company with gallants is preferable to being neglected by indifferent husbands.

Clara, Lord Raymond's ex-mistress, represents the end of the cycle of women's experience under patriarchy: widowhood. Unlike the single woman who often still has the protection and guidance of a guardian, the widow is usually left without a means to support herself and her children. She is either forced to marry again or to depend on relations. In the case of Clara, she is left destitute because of her husband's gaming. Thrown into debtors' prison, Edward deprives his family of support, forcing them to join him in gaol. This was not an uncommon occurrence in the eighteenth century. Charlotte Smith, who took up writing while spending time in debtors' prison with her husband, is a well known example. Wallace implies that women are not educated to support the family when the husbands are incapacitated. Moreover, men who deprive their families of support because of vice are unfit to be the heads of the household yet women are encouraged not to take the "reins of government." She is also critical of the inhumane system of debtors' prison which prevents a person from attempting to pay off the debt and simultaneously starves him of whatever remaining funds he possesses by charging fees for various "services." This system is aided and abetted by the ton which encourages its members to divest themselves of their fortunes thereby placing themselves in debt. The real victim is usually the wife. Clara's sentimental history depicts a woman who must sacrifice herself for her husband's mistakes. When

Edward dies, she is left destitute, dependent upon the charity of others. Such a situation leaves a woman vulnerable to unscrupulous individuals since she is beleaguered not only by financial necessity but also by emotional anxiety. Clara is thus easily seduced by Lord Raymond:

> My heart is grateful to excess: and fatal opportunity with that freedom, which I feared to deny the only benefactor of my husband, led me insensibly on the brink of dishonor. (*weeps*)--Remorse has haunted me since the fatal moment of my ruin. Alas! I could not think he could be so cruel as to make my honor the price of his bounty. (IV.iii.74)

Clara is exonerated from the sin of sexual misconduct since Lord Raymond had taken advantage of her circumstances by falsely presenting himself as her benefactor. Her honour is restored and her ruin judged nonexistent; she is deemed an "innocent dupe." Jacqueline Pearson, in surveying a number of plays from the Restoration to 1737, argues that women such as Clara are only restored to innocence after having suffered extreme guilt; the self-criticism serves as punishment even if the women are undeserving of such suffering (59). Wallace, however, presents a different case. Clara is deemed innocent because of her husband's gaming habits, an unmerciful jail system, and a treasonous benefactor--more importantly, she is innocent because she had chosen to suffer for the sake of Lady Raymond whom she had heard was a woman of virtue. Moreover, Wallace implies that rigid morality is a code imposed by men upon women, as seen in Lord Raymond's hypocritical behaviour against his wife, whereas real virtue demands compassion and judgement.

Each of these women represents an aspect of a continuous narrative of female experience beginning with the young schoolgirl, Julia Raymond, progressing to the widow, Clara. These women are portrayed as naturally sexual beings who desire

companionable marriages, who want to enjoy the gay life with their husbands, and who want to be considered as equal partners. Instead, they live in a society which insists on denying their feelings and their self-worth: men are conditioned to see women as fools or to be fooled, to regard women as toys, to expect perfect rectitude from their wives at all times, to choose their wives with less care than they choose their horses and dogs, to value wives below their mistresses, and to suspect their wives of trying to usurp power from themselves. Because of these attitudes, true virtue requires empathy, compassion, generosity and honesty. Wallace suggests that female virtue is capable of an heroic quality because it is simultaneously objective and subjective: circumstances and motivations are taken into account, providing women with a more realistic view of themselves and of the world around them. Julia, Lady Bonton and Clara are not dismissed as fallen women; they are judged victims of a system that incorporates different standards for women and for men; thus it is the men who must reform.

The men in this play are all potential tyrants. Because they have been long conditioned to behave in a selfish manner, their regard for women consists of gender stereotypes. The club scene in Act IV provides a complement to the above complaints by the female characters:

> *Bonton.* I protest: I wonder any man can feel comfortable in his own house.--Whenever I wish to be at home, I always drive to the clubs. Ha, ha, ha!
>
> *Daffodil.* And yet Lady Bonton is so charming a woman. I really believe, my Lord, you are the only man alive who can desert Bonton-house.--Besides she is so vastly good-humour'd; she, I dare say, will ask any one you like, to render it agreeable to you.

Bonton. Why she is very well, if she was not my wife. But tho' the woman that I wish the most to have is there, still it is impossible for me to conquer my aversion to home. [*Yawns*] 'Pon my soul the very thought of it sets me asleep.

...

Raymond. Very unlike me, faith.--I have been in quest of Clara, who has eloped,--and I cannot discover where the devil she has concealed herself.--She talked in a high style about the dishonour of living with me, now that I'm married; and cash is so low, I could give her nothing.

Daffodil. Oh, it would have been very foolish to have settled any thing on her, since she chose to leave you.--I warrant she is gone to some one she likes better.--He, he, he!

Bonton. Raymond, when is your sister to be married?

Raymond. 'Pon my life, I'm so very much hurried, that I've never had time to ask.

Daffodil. I hear Ormond has a very awkward affair on his hand with Lady Clairville.

MacPharo. Sure he may be tired of her by this time:--It is a year since that affair began.

Daffodil. Faith, she is a glorious girl:--I past some of the happiest moments of my life with her, at Tunbridge.

...

Daffodil. La! I never can take any notice of a woman--but every one supposes that I am well with her.--Villiers, your present affair seems to be Lady Worthy. He, he, he!

Bonton. I doubt that; for I never could make any thing of her: she is so froide. As unfeeling as marble, and so confoundedly knowing it is impossible she could be taken in.--

...

Villiers. Sure no one would marry a low-born creature, worn out with age and infirmity--because a fool has left her an enormous fortune?

Daffodil. She is good enough to make a wife of--What signifies it whether she is in person an angel or a devil.

Bonton. Very true, Daffy--A man of sense marries for convenience--and only as far as it is convenient thinks of his wife afterwards. Ha, ha, ha!

Villiers. One cannot wonder then at those ladies, who seem indifferent about their conduct, since they find it a matter of such indifference to their lords.

Bonton. If one's wife is good-humour'd, and has some variety in her; why a man may be led to have a little kindness for her, when every thing better is out of the way:--but, mercy on us, Villiers, you wou'd not have a man of Ton, like a vulgar mechanic, regularly attend prayers and the duties of matrimony. Ha, ha, ha!

Daffodil. Shocking vulgar, indeed!

MacPharo. Very vulgar, faith:--If they did, we single fellows should have nothing for it, but to take wives of our own. Ha, ha, ha! (IV.i.58-64)

This scene provides a stark contrast to the various conversations among the women themselves. The men indulge in all the worst fantasies and stereotypes of women

wives are not sexual beings, wives are to pimp for their husbands, women are either lewd or frigid, women of virtue are a waste of time, wives are a matter of convenience--sexually, financially, emotionally and practically. Displaying a complete lack of respect for women, they also reveal a neglect of themselves and of their responsibilities. Lord Raymond is guilty of gambling away his fortune, of betraying Clara, of neglecting his obligations to his sister, Julia, whose age and inexperience require his guidance and of accusing his wife of adultery. He has refused to spend enough time with Lady Raymond to know her worth, because the ton has conditioned him to ignore her until it conveniences him to use her virtue against her. Lord Bonton, who confesses to loving his wife, insists on indulging in affairs. Lord Ormond is guilty of seducing Julia while on a drunken binge and therefore of forsaking Lady Clairville. His honour prevents him from participating in the ton, but it is precisely that sense of honour which forces him to behave in a manner more concerned with his own ease of mind than that of Julia and Lady Clairville. In essence, he is no different than Raymond. Daffodil is the worst practitioner of the ton. His emphasis on appearance and reputation depersonalizes people, demeans relationships to gossip and deflates himself to a set of clothes. He is exposed as the ultimate social pretender. All these men neglect their duties as father, brother, husband, benefactor and friend; instead, they try to steal each other's fortunes and wives. Because "ruin" and "dishonour" for men conventionally refer to financial loss or to unmasculine behaviour such as cowardice, Wallace is redefining these terms, associating them with male misbehaviour in the domestic sphere; their private conduct is subjected to the same kind of moral censure as female behaviour. The ton, then, frees men from social and political obligations but imprisons them in a false world of self-destructive dissipation.

Therefore the ton is a system which only appears to bestow power on its members when it actually makes victims of them. Women, as well as men, unnaturally suppress their natural inclinations and qualities, subjecting themselves to values that deny them their self-worth. Society, then, is composed of actors and actresses, each concerned with effect, not reality. Though Wallace's main concern is with the personal conflicts generated from this kind of behaviour, she is well aware of the overall social-political implications. Betrayal, superficiality, perjury, hypocrisy, all masked under the false cordiality of the ton, make up the social fabric, thereby opening the way for subversive elements to undermine the power of the ruling upper classes. MacPharo and Mrs. Tender are such elements. Unlike Daffodil, who is somewhat harmless, MacPharo is financially and sexually ambitious. Taking advantage of the gambling habits of the aristocracy, he encourages their vice, gains entry to their society with money and steals their wealth and their wives. The consequences are more severe than the mere threat of debtor's prison, for a broken household in terms of finances and marriage creates an unstable social base that in turn creates an unstable political base. Encouraged to indulge in vices, the nobility will have no time to consider matters of home and state.

Mrs. Tender, MacPharo's counterpart, attacks the ideological front. Pretending to be a woman of virtue, she is able to assassinate reputations and characters with sly innuendoes and claims of moral righteousness. Since the ton only emphasizes appearances, Mrs. Tender has no problems with reality since she only need present herself and others as illusions. The contrast between Mrs. Tender and Lady Raymond points to the ease with which this society perpetuates vice instead of nurturing real virtue. The kind of virtue Mrs. Tender professes to have is not acceptable; it is rigid and tyrannical for not all men are rakes and not all women are whores. Because the

ton allows the MacPharos and the Tenders to flourish, it denatures its members and thereby destabilizes society.

In The Ton, Wallace exposes the hypocritical values of fashionable upper class society and details the consequences of behaviour which purport to liberate women and men from sexual, social and political oppression. She uses the non-dramatic but feminine form of the narrative to portray the interconnecting lives of five women: Julia Raymond, Augusta Clairville, Fanny Raymond, Lady Bonton and Clara. Exhibiting a bond of female empathy, relationships between these women are shown to be positive and necessary. In contrast, male friendships are insincere, competitive and destructive. Wallace suggests that gender stereotypes are socially contrived delusions destabilizing and devaluing gender relations. Courtship and marriage should be based on honesty where love is exchanged for love, trust for trust, virtue for virtue; contrary to the beliefs of the ton, the gay life can be enjoyed together. Gaming, gallantry and coquetry, common subjects for satire, are fully revealed as chaotic behaviour; they express values which invert the normal and the natural. Wealth, virtue, love, respect and faith are all regarded with indifference.

Resolutions to the individual conflicts, then, are appropriately initiated by the men involved. By laying the onus of moral responsibility and reform on the men, a more realistic portrayal of women is made. A new society emerges with the reformation of Raymond, Ormond and Bonton; they are incorporated into this new society where integrity and equality are the social norm. Daffodil, MacPharo and Mrs. Tender are rejected and left to practise their deceits in the ton.

Wallace did not write her comedy to amuse, but to force her audience to look with contempt on activities and values which promote hypocrisy and oppression. Unlike the typical sentimental comedies of her time, the situations are not solved by

unravelling subplots or by submissive female characters who willingly sacrifice themselves for their men or for society. Domestic problems are exposed as public issues: women are not to be isolated or left as passive victims.

Notes to Chapter Three

1. I have chosen the term "narrative" because much of the play is developed through conversations between the characters about other characters so the storylines of many of the characters occur in the past and not on the stage. Moreover, narrative is considered to be a feminine form of writing which many women playwrights used to express their feminist views. Margaret Cavendish, Katherine Phillips, Elizabeth Griffiths, Hannah Brand and Joanna Baillie are some of the female dramatists well known for their "non-dramatic" plays. However, contrary to eighteenth century contexts, I do not use this term in a pejorative sense; "narrative" is used to recognize Wallace's style as a legitimate form of dramatic expression.

2. The Ton was staged for three nights at Covent Garden. The London Stage shows that the receipts for each of the three performances exceeded expectations for a new play: April 8: £295 18s 6d; April 10: £217 14s 6d; April 12: £181 13s. The Account-Books do not list any tickets sold by Wallace for her benefit night (April 12), nor, apparently, was the house charge of £105 levied. It is unknown whether she had made another arrangement with the theatre. The drop in receipts indicate a growing disinterest by the audience which, according to Wallace, was due to the false charge of "indecency" raised against the play. In terms of performance, the cast is comparable to the one in Inchbald's The Midnight Hour: Captain Daffodil-William Lewis; Lord Ormond-Alexander Pope; Lord Raymond-William Farren; Macpharo-John Henry Johnstone; Lady Raymond-Elizabeth Pope; Lady Clairville-Anne Brunton; Clara-Mary Wells. (Hogan Pt.5, vol. 2; Highfill)

3. As Moira Ferguson points out, the option of entering a convent had been greatly reduced since the mass closure of monasteries and convents in 1536-1539 (4). Conventionally, the relegation or banishment of a female character to a convent is a

form of punishment for transgressing society's ideal of womanhood. It is a way of controlling her sexuality and of preventing her from corrupting the dominant values of the status quo. Alternatively, convents are places of escape where women can educate themselves without male interference and where female friendships are positive and nurturing. In Wallace's case, she seems to exhibit the typical ambivalence found in pro-feminist writing. She obviously places the cause of the seduction on the ton for educating Julia in a less than adequate manner and on Ormond who violates his own integrity by taking advantage of Julia whom he knows is poorly educated. Yet the fact that Ormond escapes from this affair unscathed and is reconciled with Lady Clairville follows the conventional pattern of reward and punishment seen in drama written by women.

Chapter Four The Whim

After The Ton, which was a critical and financial failure, Wallace departed from the stage and produced two prose works. The first was a letter to her son Captain William Wallace advising him in personal and public affairs. Her second work, The Conduct of the King of Prussia and General Dumourier, including autobiographical information, was an account criticizing the actions of the King of Prussia. The Monthly Review gave a sarcastic review that calls her a "prophetess and political physician" who ought to be closeted for next trying to save her own country (May 1794). Obviously dabbling in political issues, Wallace's last attempt for the theatre continues her political "doctoring." The Whim, an original comedy in three acts, is an attempt to diagnose the social-political ills of the nobility and to offer a solution which involves the political voice of the lower classes. Refused a licence when it was submitted on April 7, 1795, it was published in the same year with a lengthy preface expounding her social-political views as illustrated by her play. In criticizing the irresponsible behaviour of the nobility, linking this to incompetence and corruption in the political sphere, and recognizing and legitimizing the political voice of the "inferior classes," Wallace offers an interpretation of the "Glorious Constitution" that paradoxically combines traditional, reformist and revolutionary sentiments.

The Biographia Dramatica dismisses The Whim as a "strange jumble...of nonsense and vulgarity. Her ladyship might have kept her Whim to herself, and no loss sustained by the public" (Vol.III). Such a patronizing view hardly does justice to the play which is a careful and passionate statement of the need to reform the moral standards of the nobility whom Wallace acknowledges as forming the social and political leadership of the country. Given the contents of the Preface and the play, it is not surprising that The Whim was refused a licence despite Wallace's humane intention to use this work to raise money for the poor and sick. L.W. Conolly in The

Censorship of English Drama attributes Larpent's motivation to concerns over the satirical treatment of England's ruling classes. He notes that of the thirty-four passages marked for omission, almost all reflect unfavourably upon the nobility, the aristocracy and even royalty (104). Conolly concludes that such censorship is unjustified, for the play is only "mildly satirical." However, the years 1792-94 saw measures of extreme oppression taken by a government tired of an atmosphere stirred up by Cartwright, Price, Paine, Hardy, Tooke and others. The reform movement, meaning those who advocated parliamentary and economic reform though not necessarily in agreement with one another, was in full activity by this time, but it experienced a backlash because of France's military endeavours on the continent and because of the war declared between England and France in 1793. Sedition and libel trials became commonplace, one of the most notorious involving Paine who was tried and convicted *in absentia*. These acts of oppression culminated in a witch-hunt against twelve men who were all either members of the Society for Constitutional Information (SCI) or the London Corresponding Society of the Unrepresented Part of the People of Great Britain (LCS). Thomas Hardy, Horne Tooke and John Thelwall were among the accused; defended by Thomas Erskine, who became an honorary member of the SCI for his efforts in defending reformers accused of sedition, they were found not guilty (Cone 202-209).

The issue of freedom of expression was tied in as a direct effect on the stability of the social order as defined by the status quo since most of the cases included accusations of attempting to instigate chaos and instability. Reinforcing these fears was the awakening of political consciousness in the working classes. Paine's The Rights of Man contributed much to the working classes' awareness of the inequalities they suffered. What began as economic grievances in turn raised awareness of the

social grievances. People met, complained, organized and threatened; the upper classes felt endangered by these activities. Associations formed from anti-reform and anti-revolutionary sentiment, attempting to police the social orders in the name of King, Country and Constitution. This depth of fear is illustrated by the "safety measures" adopted by various counties such as those by the justices of Surrey on January 15, 1793 in the quarter-session:

> The justices charged all constables and other peace officers firmly to suppress disorders, vigilantly to seek out evidences of sedition, and unrelentingly to bring suspects before the magistrates. Masters of families suspected their servants; innkeepers scrutinized their customers with unusual care; and generally people watched out for dangers to good order. (Cone 151)

Adding to the atmosphere of paranoia and persecution, various tracts were published, all emphasizing the dangerous consequences of reading reformist sentiment. All explained the necessity and inevitability of the social order. Writers such as Hannah More were very successful in convincing the working classes to be thankful for their poverty, ignorance and hard work (Cone 150)

Though Wallace appears not to have adhered to any one strain of thought, her play would have added to the furore. The Preface begins by defending the intent of her comedy and by recounting a letter she had written to the Marquis of Salisbury, pleading her case. As to Larpent's objections to her political sentiments, she defends them on the grounds of moral virtue. However, her opinions on virtue have a political basis which cannot be viewed as conservative or safe. The argument starts with a direct qualification on the nature of the social order. Reason, not estates or titles, is the real value of an individual. Virtue is the only quality that exalts man, for any one

who indulges in "atrocities and vice" can only be treated with contempt; the status of nobility does not exempt one from the moral censorship of improper behaviour. Contrary to traditional beliefs, virtue and worldly distinctions are not correlative. Wallace attributes the downfall of France to the arrogant immorality of the nobility. Because they perceived themselves to be above the law, they failed to realize that "although ennobled, they could be excelled by even the humblest of men, if more virtuous" (14). She believes that to save England from a similar fate, the stage, a perfect medium which simultaneously communicates to the high and the low, must be used to remind those "who forget what they owe to their high situations; for the great are certainly doubly pledged to their country to act with more distinguished virtue, good faith, and benevolence, in return for those honours bestowed upon them" (15). Not to use the stage to censure the follies of the age is to withhold

> from their view a picture of that contempt, which the humble honest mind liberally bestows, on the corrupted, however exalted by fortune or the chance of birth:--truths which the awful distance they keep, and the deference ever paid to rank, may prevent them otherwise from being made acquainted with (17).

Wallace's argument is replete with controversy. First, she dismisses the social order with a qualification that can be construed as republican. By stating that virtue, and not land or title, is the only quality of merit is to redefine the power base of the political hegemony. From the middle ages onward, land and title had always been the sole bases determining political literacy and, therefore, political power. Underlying the notion of political literacy is free agency; as defined by John Locke, a person who hired out for wages was subjecting himself to the control of another and entering into the "mere business of subsistence." Such a person has "neither the opportunity nor,

normally, inclination to interest himself in the larger affairs of civil society" (Cone 12). Property and political power, property and social status, property and the franchise are all important determinants and assumptions upon which eighteenth-century society operated. Wallaces's idea of virtue and reason redefines these determinants. She even applies her argument to the monarchy and its ministers:

> Contempt is a foul fiend, that tramples on all distinctions--for remorse degrades man even beneath the brute; and if callous to a sense of shame, fear and scorn pursue his steps, who excites by falsehood, fraud or folly, the contempt of the virtuous; even should he be clad in purple, or sleep under the gilded canopy of state. (12)

By her arguments, the nobility is not divine but mortal and accountable to mortals. To know that virtue is the only distinction of merit is to strip grandeur from the upper classes and to free the inferior classes from the oppression of awe which allows the nobility to escape moral censure. In essence, every one is levelled to the same degree; a duke is different from the peasant in terms of rank and fortune, yet the peasant may excel the duke in deeds of virtue and merit.

In conjunction with the above viewpoint is Wallace's interpretation of the Constitution:

> ...it is the pride and best prerogative of Britons that our Constitution, gloriously permits, even the humblest of mankind to be exalted,--if distinguished by virtue, or as faithful servants to their Country. (11)

Wallace's contemporaries would probably agree that the "Glorious Constitution" permits men of humble beginnings to achieve political greatness but their definition of "humble" is quite different from that implied above. The House of Commons consisted of men of property, some of whom came from low origins. By achieving

money and status, they connected themselves with landed families or they attained land themselves. Wallace appears not to refer to such men; "humble" is used to refer to the political illiterates, the "mechanics," the inferior classes who work for wages. To include the lower classes was unthinkable. Edmund Burke expresses the pervasive belief of the time:

> The occupation of a hair-dresser, or of a working tallow-chandler, cannot be a matter of honour to any person,--to say nothing of a number of other more servile employments. Such descriptions of men ought not to suffer oppression from the state: but the state suffers oppression, if such as they, either individually or collectively, are permitted to rule. (qtd in Cone 5)

Even many of the reformers such as Wilkes and Cartwright did not include the lower classes in their crusade for parliamentary reform. In their attempt to redefine the franchise, they wanted forms of property other than land to be considered as a qualification for political literacy. A more fair and equal representation of the people usually meant less landed, and more commercial and manufacturing interest. The fact that Wallace depicts servants in the position of authority suggests that the lower classes possess the opportunity and the right to have the political franchise. Moreover, she deems it a necessary right to judge the upper classes:

> But to deem it criminal for the inferior orders of mankind to judge of virtue and vice, revolts the human mind. (13)

The nobility are obliged to listen to this neglected segment of society, for "how much more flattering is it for Rulers to be acknowledged our superiors from integrity and worth, than from those fears which power awakens in the ignorant abject mind" (13)

Furthermore, the "immoral and injudicious" conduct of the upper classes only harms the "respectability and tranquility of the community" (15).

Wallace is interested in defining the boundaries of the prerogative powers of each social-political class. The upper classes, dominating the political franchise, must realize their obligations and responsibilities and perform them with virtue and humanity. The lower classes are obligated to participate actively by keeping the ruling classes in check. What Wallace envisions is a smoothly operating society structured on virtue, whereby each class possesses certain prerogative powers, a system not unlike that outlined in the three levels of government stipulated by the Constitution: King, Lords and Commons.

Though Wallace seems to believe in a sovereignty of the people, she is, like most of the reformers, not advocating a social revolution. Her viewpoint holds the nobility accountable for their behaviour, a rule applicable to the rest of society. However, by locating a political voice in the inferior classes, Wallace is creating a potential problem. Until the 1790's, the lower classes, as a unified political body, have never exhibited any awareness of social-political inequalities. With the Preface and the play, she recognizes more than a constituent power in these people: they can also achieve power without the traditional qualifications and they are shown to be capable of exercising power with judgement and virtue. Her sentiments are very similar to the more radical reformers such as Richard Price. In his famous address to The Revolution Society on November 4, 1789, he proposed two political principles:

> The right to resist power when abused.
>
> The right to chuse our own governors; to cashier them for misconduct; and to frame a government for ourselves. (qtd in Cone 82)

Wallace's view of the nobility as accountable for their actions incorporates both these principles. The lower classes have a right to resist power when abused; moreover, they have the right to keep the ruling powers in check--men are to be judged by men (14). Larpent had every indication to censor this play if only for the reason that Wallace's "sentiments are the dictates of unprejudiced conviction, and [her] approbation never bestowed but upon unquestionable merit" (15). It is precisely such self-righteous declarations based upon the claim of national security that sounds very close to reformist views. Like the reformers, she argues for the safety of England, to prevent the country from following the fate of France, whose "vices, immoralities, and cruelties...have finally hurled them from their fancied greatness, and deprived them of even the *Rights of Man*" (14). Even if Wallace had not intended to instigate a social revolution, the seeds of one are present. For the upper classes to view the contempt in which they were held by the lower classes would only confirm their suspicions and paranoia, feelings encouraged by official and self-appointed guardians of the state.

The play itself is a short, mild satire in three acts; it is not very witty but it contains shorter dialogue, quicker pacing and more comical situations than her previous two works. In theme, it deviates somewhat from the standard sentimental comedy; there is the requisite boy-loves-girl plot but it is incidental rather than central to the play as a whole. Thus unlike the other two plays, feminist sentiment is not the main concern. The play, designed to illustrate the kinds of tyranny practised by the nobility and the way society may profit by exposing such unacceptable behaviour, lies in the tradition of New Comedy. According to Northrop Frye, the standard plot involves a young man in love with a young woman, but he is opposed by some form of opposition, frequently presented in the guise of blocking characters such as the tyrannical father, wealthy rival or some other character closely associated with

established society. Near the end, a twist in the plot enables the hero to have his will (163). This kind of comedy depicts a movement:

> the hero's society rebels against the society of the *senex* and triumphs, but the hero's society is a Saturnalia, a reversal of social standards which recalls a golden age in the past before the main action of the plays begins. Thus we have a stable and harmonious order disrupted by folly, obsession, forgetfulness, 'pride and prejudice' or events not understood by the characters themselves, and then restored. (171)

The happy ending, then, is a moral judgement in which the comic action decides that one society is false or illusory and the new one is real. The new society is recognized by the audience to be a proper establishment of the new order.

Though Wallace may not have been familiar with Plautus or Terence, who imitated the style of Menander, she would have been familiar with the form from the plays of Shakespeare and Restoration playwrights. The play begins with the two main servants, Fag and Nell, who are to be the master and mistress of the household for the day in celebration of the Feast of Saturnalia. This is the whim of the true master, Lord Crotchett, a man "madly fond of Old Fashions"; he intends to reap the moral lesson from this exercise. The subplot is provided by the typical courtship between Crotchett's daughter, Julia, and Belgrave, a soldier masquerading as a footman in the household. Julia is hesitant to acknowledge his affections for her since she is already engaged to an "ancient old Trojan...a lover of antiquities and curiosities" (I.28). Complicating the situation is Martha, Crotchett's spinster sister who is in love with Belgrave. At the feast, Belgrave mistakes his uncle, Justice Chuclepate, for Julia because he is wearing the domino intended for her. When he inadvertently reveals his feelings, Martha steps in and claims his affections for herself. Fag, as master for the

day, resolves the confusion by sanctioning the engagement between Julia and Belgrave, to which every one agrees except Martha. The end restores the social order: servants and master take up their proper stations, each gaining a renewed appreciation of one another's responsibilities.

The premise of the comedy is based upon the Feast of Saturnalia which Crotchett describes as an

> ancient practice with the Romans, in memory of the Golden Age. There was no distinction of personages--no distinction of ranks.--the haughty Patricians, and the proud Partizans, were obliged to bend, for the masters on that day, became the servants of even their slaves, and heard them, with impunity, ridicule their follies, or execrate their corruptions. (I.29)

Historically, the feast was a festival of Saturnus, the god reigning in the Age of Gold. This Age was characterized by innocent happiness, by individuals who lived without strife or labour or injustice, the earth yielding its fruits in abundance of its own accord (Harvey 384). This was an age of equality, freedom and peace. In contrast, the present age is the Iron Age which Crotchett claims is a time where "all reason and philosophy are banished from the world--we have changed the uses and purposes of nature, and I do not know what the world will turn to at last" (I.30). According to Fag and Nell, the nobility of this age fail to pay their debts to friends and tradesmen; they support mistresses and prostitutes; they lie, slander and malign friends and enemies alike; they lack compassion and generosity; they tyrannize over their servants and the lower classes in general; and they are idle and industrious in dissipatory activities such as gaming and drinking. According to this testimony, the nobility have more than neglected their responsibilities; through their profligate behaviour, they have disrupted

the social and economic structure of their society. The feast will allow Fag and Nell to mimic such behaviour in order to evoke contempt and ridicule within the upper classes themselves.[1] Moreover, through their play-acting, the illusory nature of this behaviour will be revealed as hypocrisy. For in their natural identities, though they speak and act with the idioms and mannerisms of their class, they exhibit common sense and judgement thereby refuting the belief that the lower classes are mere "mechanics". When Nell pretends to be a queen, she proposes to ensure peace throughout the land, redistribute the taxes so that luxuries and gaming receive the burden, relieve the poor and ensure that everyone can support a living, and place all criminals in gaol. Fag displays a similar sense of reality when he instructs Crotchett how to be a cook:

> *Fag.* But beware of thinking of the perquisites of office:--no broken victuals. I shan't be so foolish as to be charged ten-pence for as much parsley as you get for a penny: nor will I eat capons when I pay for young Turkeys, Sirrah!
>
> *Crotchett.* I make no doubt, such things have been done before now, Sir. I shall take care in future.
>
> *Fag.* And don't eat the tid bits off my ragouts before you put them on the table; nor drink the wine allowed for sauces; nor don't oil the butter when chattering with the maids.
>
> *Crotchett.* I trust I shall profit by your instructions.
>
> *Fag.* Above, all, remember punctuality--there is no comfort in life without it. I will have a reform of manners in my visitors--no one shall come to my house to dine half an hour after my hour--nor will I have my Cook presume to make me wait a minute. Punctuality is the

> greatest comfort in life, and the want of it embitters existence! (II.37-8)

Fag demonstrates a thorough knowledge of household affairs which a master should possess. Moreover, his working-class sensibilities are portrayed as an acceptable code of morality for upper- class behaviour: economy, honesty and punctuality are universal in their application. In contrast, Crotchett's upbringing renders him useless at most trades; he cannot be a valet because he "cannot even dress himself--he is awkward, slow, and unhandy"; nor can he be a butler because he will "soon begin to forget but that he is still master." Indeed, "it is easier to be a gentleman, than a good servant" (II.36). Wallace illustrates that virtue and merit must be the only factors in considering the quality of an individual because the upper classes, as they are, are idle, impractical members of society, unfit to be masters of households. By extension, they are unfit to be leaders of the country since they are as ineffectual in their political duties as they are in their domestic affairs. Crotchett may be more enlightened than his fellow aristocrats but he is just as helpless as the most frivolous members of the ton.

Act II reinforces the criticisms aimed against the nobility. It also expands one of the themes already seen in Wallace's previous play: appearance vs. reality. In Act II, Fag and Nell practise the art of being a gentleman and a lady. Fag tries to be a man of fashion while Nell practises being a coquette; however, both, to humorous effect, repeatedly slip out of character:

> *Fag.* Oh, I am quite unfortunate; but I was so embarrassed all day yesterday, running into the City after our Grocer.--Lord, what a sad slip of the tongue, *Grocer*! I meant to say, after my Jew Broker.

Nell. Oh, you *ton* men are perpetually thus engaged. Why did you not come to the Duchess of Dash's assembly in the evening?

Fag. Lord, I detest that woman: she is always trying to have me, but I cut her quite--I went to the club, where I lost at least twenty-pence.

Nell. Lord, how vulgar!--Twenty-pence! Why, it would disgrace even a footman to play for pence!

Fag. I should say I lost twenty thousand.

Nell. I vow, I was quite jealous; I thought you had been with Lady Simper.

Fag. Oh no, my charmer, *that affair is quite over:* so soon as it ceased to be talked of, I gave her up: I don't see her now.

Nell. Vastly well, Fag! only a little more contempt when speaking of those women who have resisted you. To defame women of honor is the glory of a *ton* man!

Fag. She worked me a pair of garters for my velvet breeches.

Nell. What! this don't do for a Lady.

Fag. Confound my blundering tongue: no, sure enough it won't do that. I should say, she worked me a purse, will you accept of it--I wish only for other women's favors, to throw them at the shrine of my Goddess!

Nell. I protest, my Lord, you're quite a butterfly--you sip at every flower.

Fag. But I only adore you, my charming creature! and now that the troublesome thing, thy husband, is absent, let me prove to you the reality of my love--repulse me Nell,--sure ladies repulse a little!

[*Nell runs to kiss him.*] (II.40-2)

Their play-acting points to the insubstantiality of negative upper-class behaviour. Worldly distinctions such as dress, manners and wealth, all a reflection of status, are illusions designed to pervert nature. The "slips" made by Fag and Nell suggest that running after the Grocer, losing a few pence and sincere sexuality as signified by the garters and Nell's enthusiasm constitute more admirable behaviour than the cold, detached sterility of ton manners. Furthermore, their above actions advocate gallantry, gambling and adultery, activities that have more to do with appearances than with reality. The problem lies in a society that highly encourages and values reputations and illusions instead of reality as determined by deeds of merit. The fact that Fag and Nell can mimic such behaviour and probably perfect their play-acting after more practice reveals the nature of the ton. It is insincere and cannot be taken as a true indicator of quality. When Fag is dressed up in his fine clothes, he is mistaken for a gentleman:

> As for my extraction, no one will mind that--some Peers, faith, have no better blood in their veins. (II.38)

A system which determines value by appearances is vulnerable to chaos and instability; Fag happens to be a man of moral standards but others of less virtue can be mistaken for individuals of quality merely because of their outward appearances. Thus matters of material success should be disregarded. By placing Fag and Nell in the roles of master and lady of the household, Wallace proves that virtue, common sense and compassion are not synonymous with the ascribed status of nobility. Merit is the new badge of honour, not clothes, gallantry, wealth, titles, nor estates.

Wallace's characterization of Crotchett is an ironic variation of the tyrannical parent found in New Comedy. Despite his critical awareness of the kinds of oppressions practised by his fellow peers, he himself perpetrates and perpetuates

tyranny in his own household. To prevent his daughter from attending "balls, masquerades, assemblies" full of "gamesters, loose women and wretched husbands" (I.32), he has affianced her to an old friend also enamoured with ancient Rome. Wallace utilizes this subplot to illustrate that all kinds of tyranny, whether they are domestic or political, are the same. Reform, then, must occur on all levels. The theme of sexual inequality is not so much a separate matter of concern as seen in The Ton, but incorporated into the general moral of the play. It is judged as important a crime as profligacy. Thus the parts of Julia and Belgrave are kept to a minimum; Julia has even less of a role than Lucy, the heroine of Diamond Cut Diamond.[2] But like The Ton, some similar points concerning woman's issues are made: first, Julia's concern for her reputation is unfounded. It is for her reputation that she will not acknowledge Belgrave's love, yet from the previous play and from the happy ending in this one, it seems that a virtuous woman is never in danger of the vituperous attack of malicious individuals. Second, the tradition of arranged marriages is considered an outmoded form of tyranny. In many ways, the position of Julia is akin to those of the servants, but worse, because her status is denied equal respect from men of similar status. Third, the characterization of Martha, the spinster in love with Belgrave, deviates from the traditional lampooning of the older woman lusting after the younger man. She is not ridiculed to a severe degree nor is she accused of sexual depravity, greed, or any of the usual ulterior motives attributed to the spinster. Instead, she is described as a woman "who, from disappointment, is privileged to envy that happiness which she cannot enjoy" (III.78).

The resolution of Julia's situation is fairly typical; her father is brought to reason, she is allowed to marry Belgrave and true love prevails. Conolly calls this a "conventional father-daughter disagreement about a suitable husband for the daughter"

(102). But the manner in which the conflict is solved is unusual. Fag, as the "master" of the household, exerts his authority to give judgement:

> *Fag.* Very well, Sir, you cannot, you say; but, 'pon honor, I can, and will, now that I have the power, which I defy you ever to make better use of, than in making happy two honest hearts (III.76)

Sanctioning his decision and authority are Justice Chuclepate who is a reasonable man and Crotchett who is persuaded to prove his respect for the ancients. In resolving this conflict, Fag shows that the lower classes are capable of exercising proper authority in any situation. He rebukes Martha who is disguised in the Justice's robes to "shew some equity and mercy" and the Justice who is wearing the domino to "be all compliance and consenting, now that [he] is in the character of Miss Martha" who will be "convinced of the propriety of yielding in time" (III.76). In other words, one should only exercise one's prerogative powers and not go beyond what one is given. Reinforcing the justness of Fag's authority is the ending scene:

> *Fag.* Bravo, my Lord! you merit well to be master, since you act so nobly. Be, then, master for ever--only have the goodness to give me a place in your kitchen, where use and habit have placed my ease and comfort----There is no happiness without mental, or bodily labour without this wonted stimulus to action, I should sink under indolence ----In the gay idle scenes of the great, I should never be at home, and existence would soon become tiresome to me. I therefore wish not to usurp any more authority, except to make my dear little Nell accept of me.
>
> *Nell.* I hate all despotic power--the feelings of my heart alone compel me!

Crotchett. Now, you find what a judicious ceremony this was of the ancients. I am sure I shall be a better master for it, all my life, having learned, how painful it is for a British mind, however humble in fortune, to bend to any yoke, but that of reason.

Fag. Aye, my Lord. And I am sure, we servants shall profit by the knowledge which we have acquired. I have found how apt one is, when in power, to abuse authority, and, amidst indulgences, to forget the hardships we impose, and to look down with contempt on those who are our inferiors--only in their fortunes.

Nell. And I, for my part, shall never, in future, repine, whatever my situation--sensible that if one will make the best of it, one may derive advantages even from other people's *Whims*. I wish not, for my part, to see the order of things changed in the least----I only wish, that every body may remember, as well as I do, a maxim which I learned at Mrs. Reform's school--Never to let a flaw be long of mending, least it get incurable--*for a stitch in time saves nine*.

Crotchett. And I, for my part, never again shall give up, even for a day, the duties of my situation, as one of the three valuable parts of our glorious Constitution, who, I hope, will each, for ages yet to come, discharge, incorruptibly and distinctly, their several duties, without encroaching on each other's *prerogative*.--So that the name of Briton may, to the latest ages, prove an Example to nations, and the Admiration of mankind! (III.78-9)

Everything reverts back to its proper order. Fag and Nell are servants, Crotchett is master once more. However, two important principles reminiscent of Price's proposals

are enacted. Fag's claim that authority is easy to abuse when in power implies that such abuse must be resisted by both the giver and the receiver. Since the difference between the two is only in fortune, there is no justification for overreaching one's authority. As Nell advises, the social order will work smoothly if every one attempts to reform his her flaws. Moreover, there is no need to instigate a social revolution because virtue is the sole quality of distinction, which the Constitution already recognizes. Also preventing the need or possibility of a new social order is the implication that authority is bestowed by men, it is not divinely ordained. Wallace portrays the reversion back to order very carefully; Crotchett becomes the master again because he "merit[s] well." He is allowed to occupy a position of power bestowed by Fag who is already shown to be more than capable of taking over if that power should be abused. Therefore, Crotchett is accountable to his servants and his family, he learns that his actions must be based on reason and compassion, not caprice or selfishness. Fag's desire to return to his duties in the kitchen can be taken as a maxim for every one: mental and bodily labour, not indolence, is the key to happiness. Thus Crotchett's last speech contains a similar declaration to his duties. He will perform his responsibilities with care and without transcending his authority.

Wallace intended her play to expose the dangers of allowing the nobility to indulge themselves in corrupt behaviour while that behaviour is deemed criminal in the inferior classes. By temporarily inverting the social order, the upper classes have the opportunity to observe the errors of their ways while the lower classes assert their political voice. The exercise is meant to create an atmosphere of cooperative harmony where each class properly utilizes its prerogative powers. By recognizing the importance of one another's responsibilities, each class will strive to perform its duties with virtue and compassion. Though Wallace means to preserve the social order in her

vision of social-political peace, her conditions for maintaining that order are somewhat radical. Espousing sentiments similar to the reformers, she redefines the nature of the social order by substituting virtue for land and title as the sole quality of distinction. Because the nobility form the leading social class, she sees the dangers of identifying political competence with the outward appearances of authority. Thus her view of the Constitution includes the lower classes as possessing the ability and the opportunity to achieve authority and to exercise that authority with merit. Advocating a doctrine of sovereignty of the people, Wallace implies that the ruling powers are to be held accountable for their behaviour. She believes that since the Constitution recognizes individuals on the basis of virtue, the nobility would not be so tempted to abuse the privileges given to them by their rank. With this play, Wallace moves from her initial awkward attempt to analyze the problems of female oppression in Diamond Cut Diamond to the more impassioned analysis of sexual inequality in her second play, The Ton, and finally to the development of a universal vision that incorporates feminism into a social-political doctrine that combines traditional and radical philosophy.

Notes to Chapter Four

1. Fag and Nell are variations of the *eiron* figure who is entrusted with bringing about the new society. In this case, Fag and Nell are given legitimate authority to displace established society.

2. In New Comedy, the hero and heroine are left undeveloped because the comic action is centered on the blocking characters who provide the impetus towards changing society. Moreover, it is understood that the happy ending signifies the beginning for the two principal characters (Frye 169).

Chapter Five Conclusion

In summary, Eglinton Wallace's career was characterized by frustration. Diamond Cut Diamond became a victim of the competitive world of the theatre while The Ton and The Whim were condemned for examining subjects considered too offensive to the increasing moral correctness of the age. Generating controversy in her time and relegated to obscurity in subsequent years, Wallace's plays represent, nonetheless, an important body of work not only reflecting the ideological debates preoccupying the late eighteenth century, but also revealing a woman's attempt to participate in the public, political sphere.

Wallace's first play represents an attempt to express her feminist views. Dumaniant's play Guerre Ouverte was successful in Paris and its simple storyline seemed well-suited for her first foray into drama. However, limited by the play's original concept and format, Wallace produced a version with an awkward blend of comic action and feminist sensibility. Her emphasis on female independence, virtue as the quality of distinction instead of rank, and the lower classes as moral leaders of society, added a reformist dimension to the comedy. Paying little attention to dramatic structure such as comic situation and dialogue, Wallace found her play "unmarketable." She complained of being forestalled by Elizabeth Inchbald's adaptation, The Midnight Hour, but critics, in comparing the two plays, conclude that Wallace was guilty of rendering a too faithful version while Inchbald's showed a skilful "use of her materials." The comical situations, crisp dialogue and stock characters of Inchbald's version provide an interesting contrast to Wallace's social consciousness. The Midnight Hour reduced the role of the female characters and omitted the various statements praising female genius and female inclinations. The second speech by the heroine signifying her approval and involvement in the bet is omitted, while the maid's intriguing can be traced back to the traditional figure of the

eiron, often represented in the figure of the tricky servant, the scheming valet or the female confidante. However, an implicit criticism is directed at arranged marriages through the character of the Marquis's rival who is an old merchant obviously incompatible in age, interest and personality with Julia. The character of the Marquis is that of the traditional reformed rake and his valet is a buffoonish servant with no extraordinary qualities. The Midnight Hour was produced at Covent Garden with great success.

Wallace's next play, The Ton, reveals her personal view of the stage. Intending to "lash the follies and vices of the day," she wrote an original comedy examining the conventional myths of femininity imposed on women. Using the nondramatic form of the narrative, which Betty Rizzo and Jacqueline Pearson call "non-male," Wallace constructs a feminist polemic tracing the source of female oppression to the hypocritical values of fashionable upper class society. Conventional fem. nyths are seen as socially-contrived illusions designed to control women. Wallace shows this by redefining several oppressive concepts of female "nature": virtue is dissociated from its narrow meaning of sexual purity to include integrity, compassion and honesty. Adultery and coquetry constitute self-defensive behaviour in reaction to the indifference and lack of respect shown by men towards women. Women are particularly susceptible to moral dissipation and vulnerable to male gallantry because t ey are deprived of a proper education emphasizing virtue and self-respect instead of vanity.

Wallace's feminist polemic is also concerned with the men who espouse attitudes that devalue women. Men, conditioned to be irresponsible gallants, are placed in false positions of authority; believing themselves to be free of the "oppressions" conventionally associated with love, marriage and sexual relationships.

they are, in fact, morally corrupting themselves. Their roles as leaders of the household and of the state are jeopardized by unstable personal relationships, financial bankruptcy and hypocrisy.

Wallace intended The Ton to shame the upper classes into reforming their behaviour but the subject matter and its aims were too narrow. The audience of the day, with their increasing refinement of sensibility coupled with morality, did not find her play appealing. Moreover, the comedy's focus on the upper classes only served to offend that segment of society and alienate the lower classes by their exclusion. Further undermining Wallace's intent was her inexperience with stage-craft. As one critic noted, the lack of comic action and the excess dialogue failed to capture the attention of the audience; nor was her didacticism disguised with "wit, humour and genteel dialogue" (Monthly Review May 1788).

Seven years elapsed before the emergence of Wallace's third and last play, The Whim. Concerned with similar issues expressed in her previous play, she develops a different tactic to "lash the follies and vices" of the upper classes. Her feminist polemic is changed to a social-political one where the lower classes are used to expose the moral failings of their social betters. In recognizing the lower classes as a legitimate voice of authority, Wallace redefines the qualifications for the political franchise. By arguing that virtue is the determinant of political power, instead of rank and its privileges, Wallace intends to force the upper classes to realize that the traditional assumptions forming the basis of their authority is false. She claims that any individual, regardless of social status, is capable of achieving and exercising social-political power if he or she does so with merit. Reflecting reformist doctrine, Wallace demystifies the traditional class assumptions associating rank and its privileges with authority.

These ideas are dramatized in the play through the device of the Feast of Saturnalia. Servants and masters exchange positions for a day, thereby creating a levelling effect where individuals are distinguished solely by virtue. Fag and Nell, the "master and mistress" for the day, are shown to perform admirably, exhibiting common sense, compassion and judgement, while Lord Crotchett, the real master, is found guilty of forcing his daughter into an arranged marriage. Fag's decision to overturn Crotchett's plans and unite Julia with her lover, Belgrave, is deemed a just act. The reversion back to everyone's proper role, at the end of the play, reaffirms the social order but it also redefines the power base of that order. The upper classes are no longer perceived or considered to be infallible, or invulnerable to the moral standards of society; like other members of society, they are to be held accountable for their actions. Social distinction by rank, wealth, and land is supplanted by virtue. In this manner, a stable, harmonious society will exist, with each class properly exercising its respective prerogative powers. In Wallace's intent to eliminate class conflict, she paradoxically generates potential class conflict. Each social class is made to realize its respective authority by experiencing the contempt which arises from the traditionally derived differences held against one another. They are led to discover that those differences are irrelevant because real power is determined by virtue.

Wallace's inclusion of the lower classes in her vision of a socially and politically balanced society would have added to the fears of the upholders of the status quo, who were already alarmed by the activities and sentiments of a working class awakened to political consciousness. The suppression of The Whim suggests that Larpent believed that her ideas were dangerous enough to have effected a violent reaction. Published in 1795, the play does not seem to have elicited any response from the public readership. Later critics, such as Nicoll, describe the play as a "miserable

extravaganza" which for "some reason...was denied a licence--one of the few examples of the powers of censorship which, on artistic grounds, can be heartily defended" (19).

Eglinton Wallace's contribution to the theatre is twofold: as a playwright, she produced works which deviated from the types written by other women playwrights and defied the expectations of the public; as a "politician," she participated in the ideological debates of her time, dramatizing rationalist arguments on feminist and social-political issues. In taking an unorthodox approach, which may have shortened her career, Wallace refused to compromise with the theatrical establishment. Disgusted by a public who thought she was indecent and by critics who refused to take her seriously, Wallace stopped writing drama. Though her plays are not as well structured, or as amusing as others, the body of work she created is worthy of a second look. The Whim, in particular, shows improvement in her dramatic technique and may prove interesting as a revival. However, Wallace's main contribution to women's literary history lies in adding to our information about late eighteenth century drama written by women. Thus far, the study of women and the theatre has been confined to the dramatic canon of female playwrights in the Restoration era and to the familiar circle of Griffith, Cowley and Inchbald. Susan Staves argues:

> The work of reclaiming and reappropriating the majority of texts by women writers effectively lost from the canon is crucial not only to correcting literary history and to appreciating the achievements of women writers, but also to the creation of a sound feminist theory and to a true understanding of the process of canon formation. (256)

Without discussing the problems associated with canon formation in the context of feminist criticism, which is not within the scope this thesis, I contend that the study of women like Wallace is important.[1] She is representative of how male and female

writers, affected by the impact of the French Revolution on domestic politics, participated in the ideological debates of the time. We are not limited to the "serious" works of Wollstonecraft, Godwin, Paine, Hays and others to see what kinds of social-political philosophies were being expounded. Moreover, in terms of theatrical history, Wallace was one of the few playwrights, male or female, who decided to use the stage in this manner. Therefore, Eglinton Wallace's comedies illustrate the necessity of recovering the works of other women dramatists of the late eighteenth century in order to construct not only a more accurate view of women in the theatre, but of theatre as a whole.[2]

Notes to Chapter Five

1. Susan Staves also quotes from Lillian S. Robinson's article which discusses the problems of revising the literary canon within a feminist context. Robinson explores the various approaches used by feminist critics in expanding the canon and discusses the one main problem arising from each approach: the question of aesthetic standards. She concludes:

> When I developed my remarks for publication, I wrote about the problems of dealing with an author who is trying too hard to write elegantly and I attempted to make the case that "cliches or sentimentality need not be signals of meretricious prose, and that ultimately it is honest writing for which criticism should be looking." Nowadays, I would also address the question of the female tradition, the role of popular fiction within it, and the influence of that fiction of its audience. It seems to me that, if we accept the work of the professional "scribbling woman," we have also to accept its literary consequences, not drawing the line at the place where that literature may have been the force which enabled an otherwise inarticulate segment of the population to grasp a means of expression and communication. (95)

Robinson is also quoting from her chapter, "Working/Women/Writing," in Sex, Class, and Culture (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1978), p. 252.

2. Other women playwrights of this era, who wrote comedy, include Joanna Baillie (1762-1851), Hannah Brand (?-1821), Margaret Holford (fl. 1785-1814), Elizabeth Harlow (fl. 1789), Harriet Lee (1757-1851), Marie-Therese Kemble (1775-1838), Mary O'Brien (fl. 1785-90) and Marianna Starke (1762?-1838). For a complete list of

female dramatists 1660-1823, refer to Mann in the Works Consulted; for biographical and literary information on these women, refer to Todd's A Dictionary and to Blain in the Works Consulted.

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Appendix I Character lists for the three plays including a cast list for Inchbald's The Midnight Hour

Guerre Ouverte	The Midnight Hour	Diamond Cut Diamond
Baron de Stanville	General Don Guzman-John Quick	General Steady
Marquis de Dorsan	Sir Charles Dashwood-William Lewis	Marquis of Dash
Lucile	Julia-Mary Wells	Lucy
Lisette	Flora-Mrs. Brown	Betty
Frontin	Sebastian-Thomas Ryder	Slyboots
Nanci	Cecily-Mrs. [Richard?] Webb	Deborah
Captain	Don Carlos	Captain
L'Olive	Nicholas-John Edwin	Paddy
L'Ingambe	Ambrose-James Thompson	McNab
Françoise	Mathias-James Fearon	Peter