

# **“She writes like a Woman”: Paratextual Marketing in Delarivier Manley’s Early Career**

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**Abstract:** Delarivier Manley has long been discussed as a sensational and successful Tory political satirist of the early eighteenth century. In the late seventeenth century, however, she associated with Whigs, experimented with genres, and tested different techniques for marketing her texts. Mimicking the methods of celebrity actresses, Manley used paratextual addresses to engage public interest in a carefully curated identity, creating a commodity in her persona that she would employ throughout her career. This paper traces her developing persona in her first three publications: *Letters Writen by Mrs. Manley*, *The Lost Lover*, and *The Royal Mischief*. Although these texts are not explicitly political satire, they nevertheless explicate the preliminary and halting machinations of an astute businesswoman and the marketing tactics Manley would employ throughout her career. The result is a more complete and nuanced picture of Manley’s commercial authorship.

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In 1696, Delarivier Manley made her debut in the London literary marketplace with the publication of familiar letters and two plays; by 1697, she had disappeared and would not return in earnest for almost a decade. The halting beginning of Manley’s authorial career has provoked speculation as to why the woman who would become a dedicated and successful pamphleteer, essayist, and satirist in the early eighteenth century would have had so little interest in maintaining her burgeoning celebrity in the late Restoration. Manley’s departure was marked by the performance of *The Female Wits* (1696), an anonymous comedy that satirized her character along with fellow playwrights Mary Pix and Catherine Trotter. Consequently, a predominant theory is that this play was “destructive to the women playwrights’ careers, forcing Manley from the stage, and chasing Pix and Trotter to other houses,” as Jane Milling has summarized (119–120).<sup>2</sup> More recent studies that examine Manley’s career as a whole have usefully

<sup>1</sup> Many thanks to Margaret J. M. Ezell and Mary Ann O’Farrell for their guidance on earlier drafts of this project. Archival research was supported by the University of Chicago through the Robert L. Platzman Memorial Fellowship.

<sup>2</sup> Milling usefully sets up this debate before positing her own argument—that the satire was of the theatre, not just the playwrights.

questioned this conclusion. The woman who would go on to publish the infamous *Court Intrigues as a Collection of Original Letters from the Island of the New Atalantis* (1711) would hardly be chastised enough to leave professional writing if her arrest after *The New Atalantis*'s publication did not deter her from writing three additional volumes. Why, then, would Manley vacate a social and literary position that was by most accounts growing in prominence if only to start over again later?

The most compelling argument belongs to Rachel Carnell and Ruth Herman, who both conclude that the gap between the 1696 texts and the 1707 publication of the first section of *The New Atalantis* and *Almyna*, a play, was precipitated by Manley's relationship with John Tilly.<sup>3</sup> As his mistress and coconspirator in various financial schemes, she had alternative methods of gaining financial support, if not stability, during this period.<sup>4</sup> These conclusions cast Manley as a writer whose primary motivation for entering into the literary market was financial, and it is an impulse that would not have wanted throughout her life. Later in Manley's career, her financial motivations led her to politics, and much of the scholarship on Manley has focused on her identity as a political writer in the early eighteenth century. This focus is not without warrant; she gained significant fame from assisting Jonathan Swift with the production of the *Examiner* (1710–1715) in 1711 and publishing *The New Atalantis, Adventures of Rivella* (1714), and multiple pamphlets that leveled their critique at Whig politics and various social gossip. In contrast, Manley's 1696 publications are disparate and unconnected. They include *Letters Writen by Mrs. Manley* (1696), a prose piece that largely refrains from political commentary, and *The Lost Lover* (1696) and *The Royal Mischief* (1696), plays that have been read politically but are not satirical and do not directly critique current public figures.

Perhaps due to this deviation in authorial motivation or its comparatively modest success, Manley's early work is understudied in comparison to what followed. While *The Royal Mischief* has attracted a fair amount of interest due to the desiring gaze of its female protagonist and proto-feminist overtones, both *Letters* and *The Lost Lover* are scarcely mentioned outside of the long-ranging studies by Herman and Carnell.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The first version of *The New Atalantis* was included with *Memoirs of the Court of England* under the title *The Lady's Pacquet of Letters, Taken from her by a French Privateer in her Passage to Holland. Suppos'd to be Written by Several Men of Quality. Brought over from St. Malo's by an English Office at the last Exchange of Prisoners*. The same year, Manley published *Almyna*, a tragedy. This gap in her publications is not absolute, as Manley contributed a poem to *The Nine Muses* in 1700.

<sup>4</sup> Her financial support was not wholly reliable, as Manley and Tilly were involved in several legal scuffles as they attempted various ways of providing a living. These schemes replaced Manley's writing career.

<sup>5</sup> For an illustrative example of the divide between Manley's early and late career, cf. Paula McDowell's seminal *The Women of Grub Street*, in which the chapter on Manley does not include a discussion of her early work, instead picking up with *The New Atalantis*.

Compounding this divide is that Manley never became a dramatic sensation like Aphra Behn, nor even as prolific as her contemporaries, Trotter and Pix. But, with her *roman à clefs* of *The New Atalantis* and *Adventures of Rivella* in the 1700s, she was a prolific and notorious major figure.

However, I argue that the “increasingly shrewd businesswoman” of the eighteenth century was not born in 1707, as most scholarship implies (cf. McDowell 231); she started in 1696 with a surreptitious collection of letters and a failure and moderate success at the playhouse. While Manley’s early career was “experimental, both in the genres she chose, the literary conventions she revised, and in the persons from whom she sought patronage”, she was unwavering in viewing publication as a business and her work and commercial persona as commodities (Carnell 85). These preliminary publications are the product of a commercial author whose identity was still in flux, and they elucidate the beginnings of her commercial tactics.

### **Commercial Personae and the Female Playwright**

In the late 1690s, Manley, Pix, and Trotter briefly created a network of female playwrights who adopted Behn’s explicitly feminine commercial authorship.<sup>6</sup> They exchanged dedicatory verses that framed each other’s work as successors to the dominant literary women of the Restoration. In Trotter’s *Agnes de Castro* (1695), an adaptation of Behn’s novel of the same name, Manley inscribes “Orinda, and the Fair Astrea gone,” referring to Behn and Katherine Philips, with Trotter as their replacement on “the Vacant Throne” (“To the Author”). Their mutual support quickly faded, but Manley continued to use a paratextual methodology that relied on her identity as a woman and a commercial author. In addition to these poems, Manley included prefaces and letters to the reader to present a persona that would put forward a seemingly authentic reaction to public opinion or explain the motivation behind authorial decisions, often using her identity as a woman author to sensational and material advantage. Manley used the guise of authenticity provided by paratextual addresses to engage public interest in a carefully curated identity, creating a commodity in her persona that she would employ throughout her career. By the mid-1710s, Manley’s persona was well established and of interest to the reading public. She was a “literary chameleon of sorts, capable of modifying her self-representations to suit her readers’ tastes” (McDowell 231). She was even popular enough that she had to intervene to write *Rivella* herself when notorious fictional biographer Charles Gildon and publisher

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<sup>6</sup> See Milling’s “The Female Wits” pg. 120–21.

Edmund Curll attempted to capitalized on popular interest in her history by producing a possibly unfavorable version of her life and works.<sup>7</sup>

The construction of this voice and rhetorical flair in the 1696 publications is crucial for understanding Manley's commercial methodology. Arguably, her persona already originated in the surreptitiously published *Letters*, which was conveniently put out on the market the month before Manley's first play. Her plays extended the interest in her private identity to an explicitly public persona that anticipated and quickly adapted to the changing public opinion and reception of her work. The prefatory epistles evoke a textual version of her identity that perpetuates public discourse and frames reception for its readers by offering a reaction to criticism or praise. With the second play furthering the impact of the first, Manley's voice rapidly develops a distinct tone and rhetorical flair that delights in subversive femininity and transgresses social expectations for commercial gain. Her early attempts at self-textualization through a persona lack the polish of *The New Atalantis* or *Rivella* but show how through initial failure and eventual mimicry of celebrity actresses and female authors, she forged a characteristic voice and would eventually develop into a notorious commodity.

Although Manley would become a notorious Tory pamphleteer in the early eighteenth century, in 1696 she was associating with Whigs and writing less scathing literature that did not incorporate political figures. Following the Restoration of Charles II, there was an increase in demand for new texts, especially leisure literature such as novels, fictional prose, and plays (McKendrick et al.). Literary publication was financially risky for printers and publishers,<sup>8</sup> but a lapse in licensing laws and the opening of a new playhouse in 1695 created an opportunity for authors who sought commercial gain. In addition to Manley, 1696 saw the introduction of Trotter and Pix, suggesting that new markets and demand created a vacuum that female playwrights were willing and able to fill. Conscious of growing public interest, Manley used paratextual notes in the form of prefaces, separate from dedicatory notes and the spoken prologues and epilogues of her play performances. Although they are unsigned by Manley, they use a personal, first-person address that implies the speaker is the author. They appear before the texts, framing the reader's attitude before they encounter the literary material. They capitalize on the novelty of a woman writing commercially and rhetorically position the work in the most advantageous light for buyers.

These methods drew from the techniques celebrity actresses used to commodify interest in their private selves after rising to distinction in the late seventeenth century.

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<sup>7</sup> According to correspondence published by Edmund Curll in the 1724 edition of *The New Atalantis*, Manley intervened after hearing that Gildon was preparing her biography for publication. Curll indicates she persuaded him to let her write the memoirs herself and did so in a matter of days.

<sup>8</sup> See especially Chapter 3, "The Printed and the Printers," in James Raven's *Publishing Business in Eighteenth-Century England*.

As prominent, public, and visible signs of women entering into commercial enterprises, actresses were among the first to mitigate the destabilizing impacts of the female body in public spaces for general viewing. As businesswomen, they were primarily interested in making a living, but they also had to navigate the cultural implications of challenging accepted, though not universal or absolute, social norms. Felicity Nussbaum has argued that these women used “a theatrical version of a private persona” which included a “partially fictive offstage personality” that gave the “illusion that [audiences] were privy to intimate understanding of the player” (44). Kate Hamilton has expanded on this, noting that prominent actress Elizabeth Barry’s persona was a conscious and maintained creation built through “[her] choice of roles, acting style, and association with public figures” (293). The success of Barry and other actresses inspired authors including Manley, Thomas Otway, and Nathaniel Lee to craft roles for them.<sup>9</sup> Inevitably, their methods for success influenced authors also attempting to market themselves. Manley was one of several women who manipulated the breakdown of the public/private divide characterized by Lisa Freeman: “identity itself could be understood as a public property rather than as the private or privatized concern of the subject” (237). With celebrity actresses living dramatic on- and off-stage lives and the development of the psychologically intimate sentimental novel, private property became increasingly public.<sup>10</sup>

Using actresses as models, women authors tapped into their audience’s interest in the private lives of public women in order to create a commodity out of their identity as much as their work. Where celebrity actresses maintained a public image through the manipulation of their physical bodies, commercial authors used textualizations of themselves that faced public scrutiny through the press rather than the stage. Authors could address the public with paratextual material such as titles, prefaces, printed versions of spoken prologues and epilogues at the theatre, and dedicatory notes. These various options inevitably led to trends, patterns, and tendencies as success would inspire imitation. One very prominent means was the accompanying note or introduction to the reader; another was eliciting poems or prefaces from colleagues who were already known by the audience. Both served to introduce the audience to the work or framing it a certain way, garnering interest from browsers in bookstores by connecting writers to a preexisting literary network or displaying works of the same style.

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<sup>9</sup> There is not enough space in this article to do justice to the vast and varied amount of literature on Restoration actresses, especially Nell Gwyn and Elizabeth Barry. For a solid introduction to Barry and her usual partner Anne Bracegirdle including how playwrights including Manley used their skills, see Gilli Bush-Bailey.

<sup>10</sup> See Kristina Straub and the edited collection from Mary Luckhurst and Jane Moody.

Women writers faced a smaller pool of predecessors and a more arduous process for acceptance as legitimate voices for public consumption. For women there was also the omnipresent threat of conflating the commercial author with prostitution (Corporaal). Consequently, certain trends in both literary content and paratextual material became prevalent in the Restoration and early eighteenth century in order to combat or exacerbate public perception when it was financially beneficial. In paratextual addresses, these “women self-consciously used the transformation of seemingly personal artifacts into purely textual ones as a mechanism for entering print,” part of an “initial step towards the creation of a commercial persona,” as Margaret J.M. Ezell argues (“Late Seventeenth-Century Women Writers” 140–41). The intimacy offered by familiar letters allowed audiences a “seemingly personal” introduction to these authors’ style and literary abilities. Manley mimicked the methods that Ezell has outlined for Behn, Trotter, and Susannah Centlivre. She was able to extend the guise of authenticity that a commercial persona afforded by writing prefaces and addresses to the reader as an injection of legitimate viewpoints about the writing, production, or reception of her work.

In *Letters Writen by Mrs. Manley*, Manley begins to define her commercial persona through the unofficial publication of her letters. These letters foreground the “seemingly personal” by introducing the reading public to Manley’s “Thoughts and Sense” (To the Incomparably Excellent Mrs Delarivier Manley ). The text was published at the same time as the performance of her first play, *The Lost Lover*, as a contrast to the “Trifles” of public playwriting. The preface indicates that Manley’s permission was not sought before publication of the *Letters*, but this assertion cannot be taken at face value. Pirated editions of texts were common, but just as common were authors who wanted the fame of publication without the negative social implications (Ezell, *Social Authorship* 46–7). Consequently, there does not seem to be a consensus among scholars about whether or not Manley did secretly approve of the publication. Herman simply notes that the edition was “unauthorized” (217), but Carnell implies that Manley did intend the letters for publication. She concludes that “[i]t is likewise possible that the letters were never actually sent to anyone, but were literary constructs, designed in imitation of d’Aulnoy’s epistolary travelogues” (88). Similarly to Carnell, María Jesús Lorenzo-Modia posits that “[o]ne cannot help thinking that this can be a literary device contrived by Manley herself, who—with that prefatory text—would try to pursue some commercial aim” (285). By publishing two plays under her name that same year, Manley does not seem to be one who would shy away from attaching her name to a deliberate publication of her letters. Nevertheless, their timing and content are suspiciously advantageous to an author looking to create a certain image with the London literary circles. What is known is that *Letters* was published in February of 1696, with *The Lost Lover* following in March (Carnell 83), meaning that the prose publication was society’s first encounter with

Manley's work and the moment when she would "[begin] her career-long attempt at rhetorical self-definition" (Carnell 13).

Despite their dubious publication, the letters are important for positioning Manley as an author and introducing her to her audience. The preface is written by an as yet unidentified author signed "J.H." and indicates that publishing plays is beneath Manley's genius when her tastes and sentiments are better suited for higher purposes. In addition to representing Manley as an exceptional literary talent, the letters promote the common sentiment that women's publication of plays would have negative connotations and true genius would rise above the disdainful trivialities of commercial publication. Manley was in the precarious situation of producing a known but scandalous commodity in her plays, something that "increasingly, was bought and consumed," but "was seen as infamy, as a violation of norms" (29). The preface does the work of shoring up Manley's reputation against her inevitable critics, but J.H.'s gendered critique grates against Manley's later defenses of her right as a woman to write for the stage.

Despite this comment on her gender, the preface also has some indications that Manley may have had some input in its publication herself. In addition to the commonplace praising of her talent, personality, disposition, and ability to transcend all those of her sex, J.H. helpfully begins this statement with: "Sir Thomas Skipworth and Mr. Betterton are eagerly contending, who shall first bring [Manley] upon the Stage" ("To the Incomparably Excellent Mrs Delarivier Manley"). Skipworth and Betterton, rival theatre owners, would each stage one of Manley's plays. If Manley did plan or help frame the publication, she would be able to introduce herself and her current and future work to readers of her text in addition to forwarding a persona of herself as not only connected to those who praise her, but who commend her literary merit. The letters display a different kind of skill than drama, and one that would be familiar to readers of women's writing as well as the increasingly common "found letters" model of fictional prose. It also offered Manley another avenue for commercial success apart from her play publications. Further, it shows the kind of "seemingly personal" insight into her identity that she would foster over her career. Regardless of the intended recipient of the letters, letter-writing itself was both private and public; seemingly knowing her letters may be read by more than just the receiver, Manley displays the same kind of public persona through her letters as she did shortly after with her plays: the experimental, abovementioned "literary chameleon" wit with a satirical turn.

### **Paratextual Framing of Manley's Early Plays**

Shortly after the publication of *Letters*, Manley continued her experimental self-representation with prefaces attached to the publications of her plays that would have

framed their reception beyond their short performance runs. *The Lost Lover*, a comedy and Manley's first play, did not fare well, and this is a fate it has shared in contemporary scholarship. Carnell and Herman both discuss the play's themes, relation to other genres, and implications in Manley's career, but they are largely alone in addressing the play on a significant scale.<sup>11</sup> As an outlier in discussing the play explicitly, Gwendolyn B. Needham notes that "[t]he comedy, however, was quickly and deservedly damned," and moves forward with *The Royal Mischief* (264). While the commercial failure of *The Lost Lover* and its admittedly old-fashioned plotline may dampen critical interest, Manley's recovery from this setback is a turning point in the construction of her authorial persona. This play was her first known foray onto the commercial stage, and she likely published it not only to augment the meager earnings she received from its protracted run but to defend her work against its critics. Her preface would perhaps convince readers to purchase the play despite public opinion or at the least advantageously frame her persona with clever manipulation of expectations of women authors.

In the preface to the printed edition of *The Lost Lover*, Manley shows a rhetorical awareness of the tools at her disposal in defending her play. Here she has a different task than with *Letters*. She uses a possible reference to the flattering preface of her prose piece to offset the damaging critique of her play, arguing that it was the flattery of "Men of too much Sense to be so grossly mistaken" that provoked her into pushing the play into a public audience ("Preface"). Dispersing critique away from the literary work, she continues in this personal vein to resentfully condemn her critics for their biases. She indignantly comments "I think my Treatment much severer than I deserved; I am satisfied the bare Name of being a Woman's Play damn'd it beyond its own want of Merit." Manley's tactic is to name her critics as sexist, to say that the rejection of her liminal status overshadowed the content of her piece. In doing so, she both positions herself as a transgressive writer intent on challenging gender expectations and defends the content of her play and her own literary abilities. In taking on the guise of the unfairly punished woman, Manley could appeal to her female fellows and the compassionate of her male detractors to read her plays more sympathetically, or drop their assumed biases. Then taking on a tone of humility, Manley argues that *The Lost Lover* served as a landmark; she learned the ways of the town and vowed that her next endeavor would be successful: "I now know my Faults, and will promise to mend them by the surest way, not attempting to repeat them." Whether or not this was true, it would have certainly heightened interest in *The Royal Mischief* when she indicates "there is a tragedy of mine Rehearsing, which 'tis too late to recall." Employing modesty and (assumed) naivety, Manley playfully demeans herself while charming the public with the brazen playwright who announces her next appearance.

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<sup>11</sup> A notable though not recent exception is Candace Brooks Katz.

Manley's promise that she knew how to best address her faults implies that she was aware she needed to try her hand at something new in order to appeal to her audience. With both *Letters* and *The Lost Lover*, Manley's authorship seems passive: she claims no ownership over the publication of her *Letters* (which may be true) and *The Lost Lover* is cast as the product of "the Follies of seven days." Although this is probably a machination designed to downplay the failed play, she takes no such approach with *The Royal Mischief* and instead acknowledges every aspect of the play and her choice to present it not only at the theatre, but in print following its reception. In addition, *The Royal Mischief* shows signs that Manley learned how to present herself in a way that would garner attention and sales. Her defense of her work is not just the town's dislike of women playwrights or her own folly, but a complex set of rhetorical moves that deflects authority, increases her own agency as a writer, and playfully prods the town's simultaneous condemnation and consumption of amatory drama.

*The Royal Mischief's* lascivious female protagonist, tailored roles for famous actresses, and considerable pathos caused it to be a moderate financial but significant social success. While *The Lost Lover* was a halting, old-fashioned comedy, *The Royal Mischief* built on the late seventeenth-century fascination with she-tragedies. Jean Marsden describes this genre as:

intensely erotic plays that revolve around the sexuality of a central female figure, usually a woman tainted by sexual transgression, either voluntarily or involuntarily ... In these plays, the woman does not control her own sexuality; rather, possession of her body is fought over and displayed by the play's male characters. In the semiotics of the she-tragedy, control of a woman's sexuality is marked by control of the gaze, and the she-tragedy heroine spends much of her time on stage subjected to a gaze explicitly defined as male. (65)

Manley's version heightened the already salient pathos of the genre, according to Laurie Finke making the play "deliberately overblown" in "an attempt to outdo heroic tragedy by celebrating its flamboyant excesses" (65). Where she-tragedies usually had one suffering woman, Manley had two; on-stage monologues increased in quantity; female archetypes were sensationalized to a paragon of virtue or vice, respectively; the omnipresent male gaze is challenged and complicated by the eyes of an equally desirous woman. And, each authorial decision revolved around making a product that would be irresistible for Manley's audience.

Irresistible it was, but the desiring female protagonist and female authorship of such lust caused a predictable stir amongst playgoers. In a prefatory note "To the Reader" in the printed edition, Manley defends its content and her decision to write it as a woman. She assures her readers "I shou'd not have given my self and the Town the trouble of a Preface, if the aspersions of my Enemies had not made it necessary" and

then immediately condemns “those of [her] own Sex” as under the nefarious predilections of the “Ill nature, Envy and Distraction” of her opponents (“To the Reader”). Gendering the defense once again, Manley assumes the role of the transgressive writer who locates her work as within the establishment from which she remains marginalized. Comparing the play to Thomas Southerne’s *Oroonoko* (1695), which was favorably received and featured the explicitly sexual Widow Lackitt, she declares that “the Pen shou’d know no distinction. I shou’d think it but an indifferent Commendation to have it said she writes like a Woman.” Manley argues that her gender should not limit her from staging amorous subject matter, a method familiar to Restoration audiences. However, Manley extends this argument past her authorial integrity and argues that her liminal state should actually make women in the audience more sympathetic to the production: “I do not doubt that when the Ladies have given themselves the trouble of reading, and comparing it with others, they’ll find the prejudice against our Sex.” Her strategy here both creates intimacy—with the use of the collective plural “our”—and challenges loyalty. Manley’s enemies who speak ill of the play may be friends of the women who believe it, but Manley would have them form their own opinion based on loyalty to their gender.

At its core, this strategy is similar to what is seen in the preface to *The Lost Lover*, but Manley must further extend her defense as a result of *The Royal Mischief*’s increased scandal, culminating in a three-night run at the theatre. This moderate success at the theatre and Manley’s preface implies that the notable sensationalism and pathos of the she-tragedy had their intended effect on the audience. Elizabeth Barry’s character, Homais, seemed to cause a good deal of anxiety due to her lasciviousness and incestuous relationship with her husband’s nephew.<sup>12</sup> However, Manley’s goal was likely to elicit just such a response due to the inevitable scandal that would follow, as scandal could lead to gossip, gossip to curiosity, and curiosity to filled seats at the theatre and purchases at the bookseller. It is a tactic Manley would perfect by the publication of *The New Atlantis*. With this intended goal, Manley’s persona in the preface is in the precarious situation of giving the allure of authentic outrage over misrepresentation when a scandalous reputation is what she sought to create. The preface responds to the concept that Homais was a shamelessly wanton character that would have a negative effect on the audience. Accordingly, in the note “To the Reader” she claims “I have done her no Injustice, unless it were in punishing her at the last; which the Historian is silent in.” Manley claims historical accuracy and poetic justice as defenses against the charge of notoriety as a way to seduce a bigger potential audience. The play would naturally attract certain sections of the population who delighted in scandal or were less discerning about the appearance of delicacy. However, as it was popular and talked

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<sup>12</sup> Homais has consequently been the subject of multiple articles that discuss Manley’s transgressive reversal of the gaze. See Julie Anderson, Melinda Alliker Rabb, and Margarete Rubik.

about, others would want to see the play as well, or at least go to the theatre *to be seen*. Historical accuracy and poetic justice could be used as justification, allowing her to draw in audiences who needed to excuse their attendance.

Mrs. Manley's invocation of historical accuracy refers back to *Sir John Chardin's Travels Into Persia* (1686), which she presents as the "historian" of her source material. She comments, "I am sorry to say there was a Princess more wicked than Homais. Sir John Chardin's Travels into Persia, whence I took the story, can inform the reader." As Herman has proven, however, Manley certainly pulled from a novel called *The Rival Princesses* (1689) rather than Chardin (188). By nodding to Chardin, Manley is able to use a "history" as her source material, separate from the invention associated with the subtitle of "A Novel" that accompanies the other. The defense of the *authentic* history serves several functions. First, Manley invokes a layer of social protection by laying the scandalous storyline at the feet of a titled man in Sir John Chardin. On its surface, this is somewhat at odds with her assertion that gender should not play a role in the assessment of her plays. However, this tactic also illuminates the many different audiences she was appealing to. Those who actually did believe the "enemies" who spoke ill of the play based on the gender of its author would be able to justify reading it if the narrative actually originated from a man. In this way, she challenges their double standards. Secondly, the authenticity of the narrative absolves Manley from the scandal she includes. As she omitted Homais's murder of Levan's two sons, which is present in Chardin's account, there was indeed "a Princess more wicked than Homais". Since she has exercised her judgment in writing the play, audiences should grant her as much legitimacy as her male counterpart. Addressing the concerns of as many different segments of her audience as possible, Manley maximizes her potential pool of customers.

In the same moment, Manley defended the content by noting that Homais's scandal has been tempered: "I have done her no Injustice, unless it were in punishing her at the last" ("To the Reader"). She signals that her revisions included Homais's death, something indeed absent from the previous two iterations of the story. She follows this with the observation that "*Bassima's severer Vertue shou'd incline my Audience to bestow the same Commendation which they refuse me; for her Rivals contrary Character.*" Manley asserts that Homais's punishment and Bassima's modest sexuality could give moral readers as equal a reason for enjoying the play as those who would pick it up for its titillating scenes. By again providing an excuse for more discerning readers, Manley appeals to multiple categories of Restoration readers.

Manley's last tactic is to remind the audience of the actresses playing her fictional roles; she specifically refers to Barry's portrayal of Homais by saying the ladies should not deny themselves "the pleasure of Mrs. Barry, who by all that saw her, is concluded to have exceeded that perfection which before she was justly thought to have arrived at" ("To the Reader"). She then asserts that Barry even had reservations about playing the

role. Here, Manley again shows some of her commercial machinations. Barry had played many, many scandalous roles over her career, including Roxana in Nathaniel Lee's *The Rival Queens* who is unabashedly wicked and as desirous of Alexander as Homais is of Levan. It is difficult to ascertain why Barry would have hesitated for Homais. If she did, Manley's invocation of it holds true, but even if she did not, Manley's invention heightens the scandal and interest of the play by using Barry's celebrity for her own ends. Mrs. Manley slips this observation and praise of Barry at the end of the prologue unassumingly, but it is one of the more calculated and well-calibrated tactics that she uses to sell the play. If Barry, who had played roles such as Roxana, could pause at Homais, then *The Royal Mischief* must indeed be something of interest.

Through all of these methods, Manley's persona weaves together the whole of her commercial tactics in a single prologue that marks *The Royal Mischief* as a text designed for its audience. Her references and pointed defense of each tactic underscore how increasingly aware of audience demands Manley became and how adeptly she then responded to criticism in order to increase interest and sales. Those who are familiar with Manley's melding of the personal with more monetary concerns in *Rivella* and *The New Atlantis* will notice prominent and important echoes in Manley's early work. While *Letters* and *The Lost Lover* show only spurts of her characteristic style, by the publication of *The Royal Mischief*, she has found the voice that would carry her through her career. Separate from her political ideology, this voice and its successful coercion of public opinion are important pieces in Manley's authorial development. Considering her early career, one may wonder if politics ended up being the persuasion of choice after her return to writing rather than the driving force behind all of her authorial choices from the beginning.

This discussion of Manley's commercial tactics allows us to further explore the way that authors created and used celebrity as an elusive but measured combination of the public and the private, but it also brings Manley into the fold of commercial women writers in the Restoration who were using these tactics to sell their work. In ongoing scholarship, women such as Behn, Trotter, and Susanna Centlivre have been increasingly successful at breaking the assumption that dedications, prefaces, and notes are necessarily personal rather than as constructed a text as the literature they accompany. In contrast, Manley's work is often discussed autobiographically through her political affiliations, especially in her early career when there is less ability to see her overall trajectory as a commercial author. However, the break from writing following *The Royal Mischief* and return later based on financial need reinforces her as a author primarily motivated by monetary concerns whose texts have to be considered as much as commodities as reflective of personal motivation. This conclusion not only connects Manley to her near-contemporaries Behn and Centlivre, but allows us to add her experimental tactics to our narrative of late-seventeenth century commercial

authorship. Manley provides an additional link between Centlivre and Behn and shows the impact of Behn's model of transgressive feminine authorship.

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