

TYPE-CASTING IN THE RESTORATION THEATRE:
DRYDEN'S *ALL FOR LOVE*, 1677–1704

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The paper analyzes the use of type-casting as a strategy to define character and character relationships on the Restoration stage. Contrasting the original cast of Dryden's *All for Love* (1677) with that of the 1704 revival, it argues that the choice of actresses for the main female parts in each production reveals a different conception of the play. In the 1677 performance, the pairing of Elizabeth Boutell as Cleopatra with the domineering presence of Katherine Corey (Octavia) turns the adulterous mistress into an innocent heroine and places her at the moral centre of the tragedy; this move seems designed to counteract the criticism of the king's behaviour implicit in Sedley's *Antony and Cleopatra*, performed only a few months before. The 1704 production marks a significant shift: although Elizabeth Barry in the role of Cleopatra would create a character full of passion and pathos, the casting of Anne Bracegirdle as Octavia checks this effect, and indicates that it is the forsaken wife who is now identified as the virtuous heroine. This cast redefines the relationship between the central characters, and brings the play in line with the moral values represented by the court of Queen Anne.

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In a letter to Sir Richard Steele written in 1719, the playwright and critic John Dennis launched a venomous attack against Dryden's *All for Love*; or, *The World Well Lost* (1677), a work he terms "pernicious," "immoral," and "criminal" (Hooker 1943: 163).¹ As Dennis points out, the whole play from the title to the concluding lines—"And fame to late posterity shall tell/ No lovers lived so great, or died so well"—seems to commend adultery and debauchery:

For pray, Sir, what do the Title and the two last Lines of this play amount to in plain English? Why to this, that if any Person of Quality or other shall turn away his Wife, his young, affectionate, virtuous, charming Wife (for all these Octavia was) to take to his Bed a loose abandon'd Prostitute, and shall in her Arms exhaust his Patrimony, destroy his Health, emasculate his Mind, and lose his Reputation and all his Friends, why all this is well and greatly done, his Ruine is his Commendation. (Hooker 1943: 163)

1. Dennis's letter is addressed to Steele as one of the patentees of the Drury Lane Theatre. His criticism of *All for Love* is largely motivated by his resentment that the managers of this house had decided to stage Dryden's play that winter instead of his own version of *Coriolanus*.

The criticism raised by Dennis is one that Dryden seems to have anticipated when he wrote the play, since he begins his Preface vindicating “the excellency of the Moral,” for—as he observes—“the chief persons represented, were famous patterns of unlawful love; and their end accordingly was unfortunate” (1984: 10). Dryden proceeds then to justify his sympathetic portrayal of the characters of Antony and Cleopatra: he could not, obviously, make them examples of perfect virtue, since that would make their final punishment unfair; but neither would he make them images of vice, because they could not in that case elicit the pity necessary to the success of the tragedy (1984: 10). But when he comes to the character of Octavia, he acknowledges the problem that it poses in the design of his play, and seems fully aware that it might provoke a reaction like that of John Dennis:

The greatest error in the contrivance seems to be in the person of Octavia: For . . . I had not enough consider'd, that the compassion she mov'd to her self and children was destructive to that which I reserv'd for Antony and Cleopatra; whose mutual love being founded upon vice, must lessen the favour of the Audience to them, when Virtue and Innocence were oppress'd by it. (1984: 10–11)

The interesting thing, however, is that it apparently did not. As Dryden says: “this is an Objection which none of my Critiques have urg'd against me; and therefore I might have let it pass, if I could have resolv'd to have been partial to my self” (1984: 11). The critical silence on this point is indeed surprising, since Dryden could certainly boast a large number of enemies and detractors who were more than willing to revile him on any occasion. It seems, therefore, that he must have been wholly successful in his design and that, at least in the original production, the audience must have suspended moral judgement and given their sympathy unreservedly to the tragic lovers.

Different explanations may be offered to account for this reaction. It is true, first of all, that the libertine values of the English court in the 1670s provided a frame of reception for the play in which the behaviour of Antony and Cleopatra might appear to need little justification; as Dennis put it, “never could the Design of an Author square more exactly with the Design of White-Hall, at the time when it was written” (Hooker 1943: 163). Indeed, the original Prologue presents a benevolent view of the adulterous Antony—“He’s somewhat lewd; but a well-meaning mind”—and invites the gentlemen in the audience to identify with him: “In short, a Pattern, and Companion fit,/ For all the keeping Tonyes of the Pit” (1984: 12–15). Yet the influence of courtly circles and of fashionable libertine morals is not enough to justify this suspension of judgement, since the debauchery of the court was often the object of attack in moral and satirical writings. It has also been suggested that Dryden tried to justify Antony by making his Octavia less sympathetic than his Cleopatra. Thus, for instance, Walter Scott argued that Dryden made Octavia “cold and unamiable” in order to prevent the wronged wife from drawing the audience to her side; he pointed out that the author seemed to have “studiedly lowered the character of the injured Octavia, who, in her conduct towards her husband, shews much duty and little love; and plainly intimates, that her rectitude of conduct flows from a due regard to her own reputation, rather than from attachment to Antony’s person, or sympathy with his misfortunes” (Kinsley and Kinsley 1971: 383). However, there is one factor whose importance both to the construction of the play and its reception is not often given

sufficient attention: the cast. The choice of actors was a fundamental strategy in defining the values of the play and determining the response of the audience. As I will argue here, in the case of *All for Love* the casting of the main female parts in the opening season was instrumental in making the audience withhold moral condemnation and pity the fate of Cleopatra; when the play was revived in 1704, however, the cast recorded on this occasion shows a completely different strategy at work, one that is clearly designed to direct sympathy towards the character of the injured wife, Octavia.

In his seminal study of the performance of Restoration drama, Peter Holland has shown the centrality of casting to the construction of the plays. Playwrights normally had a particular cast in mind as they wrote, and logically tried to adjust their characters to the talents and personalities of the actors. Holland quotes Colley Cibber's comments in the Preface to his comedy *Woman's Wit* (1697) as an illustration of this practice; as Cibber explains, he changed companies while he was preparing the play, which forced him to redefine his characters:

Another inconvenience was, that during the time of my Writing the two first Acts, I was entertain'd in the New Theatre [i.e. with Betterton at Lincoln Inn's Fields], and of course prepar'd my Characters to the taste of those Actors . . . In the middle of my Writing the Third Act, not liking my Station there, I return'd again to the Theatre Royal, and was then forc'd, as far as I cou'd with nature, to confine the Business of my Persons to the Capacity of different people, and not to miss the Advantage of Mr. Doggett's Excellent Action; I prepar'd a low Character, which . . . I knew from him cou'd not fail of Diverting. (Holland 1979: 73)

The cast also conditioned the reception of the play, since the audience's perception of a character depended, to a large extent, on their pre-conceived image of the actor or actress who played the part. Richard Flecknoe's comedy *The Damoselles a la Mode* (publ. 1667) is a good example of this close interaction between characters and actors. The play was rejected by both companies and was not acted. Flecknoe, however, had the play printed with a Preface lamenting its sad fate. This printed text includes, together with the *Dramatis Personae*, the cast originally intended for the performance. Flecknoe explains in a note the logic of this decision: "Together with the Persons Represented in this Comedy, I have set down the Comedians, whom I intended shou'd Represent them, that the Reader might have half the pleasure of seeing it Acted, and a lively imagination might have the pleasure of it all intire" (Holland 1979: 74).

Each actor and actress developed a particular "line" of acting and tended therefore to specialize in a certain character-type. This type depended, primarily, on their physical appearance, personality, and talent. How far an actor's physique could condition his roles is sadly illustrated in the person of Samuel Sandford. Sandford, an actor originally at the Duke's company, specialized in the tragic part of the villain, a role to which, according to Cibber, he seemed to be naturally suited by his figure:

. . . poor Sandford was not the Stage-Villain by Choice, but from Necessity; for having a low and crooked Person, such bodily Defects were too strong to be admitted into great, or amiable Characters; so that whenever, in any new or revived Play, there was a hateful or mischievous Person, Sandford was sure to have no Competitor for it: Nor indeed (as we are not to suppose a Villain, or Traitor can be shewn for our Imitation, or not for our

Abhorrence) can it be doubted, but the less comely the Actor's Person, the fitter he may be to perform them. (1968: 77)

In the case of actresses, moreover, the development of a particular "line" was also influenced by the audience's perception of her private character, as is shown, for instance, in the career of Elizabeth Currer. Mrs. Currer, who joined the Duke's company c. 1673, was a very popular player in the 1670s and 1680s. If Restoration actresses were often held to have loose sexual morals, Currer certainly was one to cultivate this image. In the prologues and epilogues she spoke she typically assumed a reputation for promiscuity. Thus, in the Prologue to Behn's *Feign'd Curtizans* (1679), she complains: "Who says this Age a Reformation wants/When Betty Currer's Lovers all turn Saints?/In vain, alas, I flatter, swear, and vow" (Todd 1996: 28–30). And in the Epilogue to Tate's *The Loyal General* (1679), she rebukes the poet for making her a nun:

Must I be cloyster'd up? Dull Poet stay,
I hate Confinement tho' but in a Play.
Doom me to a Nun's Life?—A Nun! Oh Heart!
The Name's so dreadful, that it makes me start!
No! Tell the Scribbling Fool I'm just as fit
To make a Nun as he to make a Wit. (1680: 3-8)

In line with this moral character, Mrs. Currer specialized in the roles of loose, disreputable women. She played jilts and kept mistresses, like Betty Frisque in Crowne's *The Country Wit* (1675), Madam Tricklove in Durfey's *Squire Oldsapp* (1678), Jenny Wheadle in Durfey's *The Virtuous Wife* (1679), or Diana in Behn's *City Heiress* (1682). She played the unfaithful wife Eugenia in Ravenscroft's ribald farce *The London Cuckolds* (1681), and the whore Aquilina in Otway's *Venice Preserved* (1682).

Since the actor was usually identified with a particular character-type, casting became not only a powerful tool in the definition of character, but also an effective means of establishing the expectations of the audience. Dryden was obviously well aware that his choice of actors would greatly influence the audience's perception of the characters they played and, being a resident playwright, certainly knew the possibilities of all members of the King's company well enough. The cast he employed for the opening of *All for Love* must, therefore, have been carefully selected to suit and substantiate his conception of the major characters. The part of Antony surely permitted no doubt: the leading actor, Charles Hart, excelled in the role of the heroic lover. However, the casting of the main female parts—Elizabeth Boutell as Cleopatra and Katherine Corey as Octavia—seems more surprising, as it did not place either actress within the character-types they usually played. It has been suggested that the cast may have been conditioned by the straitened circumstances and internal conflicts of the King's company (Wilson 1964: 58; Millhous and Hume 1985: 132).² A more careful analysis of this decision, however, may reveal the strategy

2. Wilson suggests that the parts of Cleopatra and Octavia would have been better suited to Rebecca Marshall or Elizabeth Cox, both of whom had defected from the company a few months before the opening of *All for Love*. Besides the leading ladies, he also finds Cardell Goodman "atrociously miscast" as Alexas, a role which he believes was originally designed for Edward Kynaston

behind this choice. As he confessed in the Preface, Dryden was worried that the confrontation between Cleopatra and Octavia might inevitably result in the moral condemnation of the two lovers. He set out, therefore, to present the characters of Antony and Cleopatra in as positive a light as he could. As he introduced them to the audience in the Prologue, he emphasized the tender feelings of his hero—“[he] weeps much, fights little, but is wondrous kind” (1984: 13)—and made a daring move to elevate the moral stature of his heroine, placing her on the same level as Octavia:

I cou'd name more; a Wife, and Mistress too;
Both (to be plain) too good for most of you:
The Wife well-natur'd, and the Mistress true. (1984: 16–18)

To sustain on stage this character of the “true” mistress, defined in the presentation of the play as “too good,” Dryden could not have made a better choice than Elizabeth Boutell. Possibly, only an actress with the figure and stage-history of Mrs. Boutell could create a Cleopatra that would appear vulnerable enough to move the compassion of the audience, and at the same time give her the moral dignity necessary to command their admiration—even when she had to play the mistress against the injured wife.

Mrs. Boutell was at this stage one of the leading actresses in the King’s company. As described by Edmund Curll, she was “a very considerable Actress; she was low of Stature, had very agreeable Features, a good Complexion, but a Childish Look. Her Voice was weak, tho’ very mellow; she generally acted the young, innocent Lady whom all the Heroes are mad in Love with” (Summers 1928: 97; Highfill 1973, 2: 261). Mrs. Boutell, indeed, was regularly typecast as the young innocent heroine. She was the chaste Aspatia in Fletcher’s *The Maid’s Tragedy* (c. 1666), Aurelia—a character described as “of singular beauty”—in Joyner’s *The Roman Empress* (1670), or the saintly Queen Catherine in Dryden’s *Tyrannick Love* (1672).³ She created the roles of the naïve Margery in Wycherley’s *The Country Wife* (1675), the constant Fidelia in *The Plain Dealer* (1676), and the virtuous and gentle princess Matilda in Ravenscroft’s *Edgar and Alfreda* (1677). Through the 1670s she was repeatedly paired with Rebecca Marshall in a series of tragedies that proved immensely successful at the Theatre Royal, and which included two conflicting female characters: a gentle and virtuous heroine and a passionate villainess—“the angel and the she-devil,” as Elizabeth Howe terms them (1992: 152–56). In these plays Boutell always played the angel, and Marshall the she-devil. Thus, Boutell was the noble Benzayda in Dryden’s *Conquest of Granada* (1670 and 1671), and Marshall, the beautiful and ambitious Lyndaraxa; Boutell, the chaste Cyara in Lee’s *Nero* (1674), and Marshall, the villainous Poppea; in Crowne’s

(1964: 58). Milhous and Hume also point out that the choice of actresses seems incongruous, but conclude that it is appropriate to the characters as defined by Dryden (1985: 133–34).

3. Even though she was not the first actress to play either Aspatia or St Catherine, it was Mrs. Boutell that was commonly identified with these characters. Downes lists Boutell as Aspatia in the cast he gives for *The Maid’s Tragedy*, though she was not likely on the stage for the first Restoration production of Fletcher’s play (1660) and probably began to play this character c. 1666 (Summers 1928: 5; Van Lennep 1965: 98; Milhous 1985: 125). In the original production of *Tyrannick Love* (1669), the part of St Catherine fell to Margaret Hughes; the name of Elizabeth Boutell first appears associated with this role in the second quarto (1672).

The Destruction of Jerusalem (1677) Boutell played the young and pious Clarona, and Marshall, the passionate Queen Berenice. A few months before the opening of *All for Love*, they had created these roles again in Lee's *The Rival Queens* (1677): Boutell was the loving Statira—interestingly enough, the injured wife—and Marshall, the wilful Roxana. Alexander, played by Hart, had momentarily fallen prey to the charms of Roxana and had broken his faith with Statira; however, when the action of the play begins, he is already repentant and begging her pardon, recognizing the superior combination of beauty and virtue in the character played by Boutell; as Alexander says later in 4.1: “Is she not more than mortal man can wish?/Diana's soul cast in the flesh of Venus!” (1970: 93–94).

This is precisely the model Dryden seems to be aiming at in his portrait of Cleopatra: in a character traditionally associated with Venus, he is trying to instill the soul of Diana. It is revealing that Dryden carefully avoids mention of the children Cleopatra had by Antony, or by Caesar. His Cleopatra appears as an almost unblemished character; she can therefore dissociate herself from the image of the wanton seductress and claim instead that of the true lover, placed in the position of mistress not by natural depravity, but by the design of Fortune:

Nature meant me
A Wife, a silly harmless household Dove,
Fond without art; and kind without deceit;
But Fortune . . . has made a Mistress of me. (1984: 4.91–94)

The casting of Boutell as Cleopatra gave substance to this image. The audience would naturally associate her with the long list of virtuous heroines she had played. In her, they could materially see the pure woman cast by accident in the role of the mistress.

As Boutell's rival in the affections of the hero—and of the audience—the actress assigned the part of Octavia was Katherine Corey. The choice clearly shows that—in this original production—Octavia was designed to be no match for Cleopatra. Mrs. Corey was a comedian, a character actress, and had scored great successes as Doll Common in *The Alchemist* (c.1660), Lady Would-be in *Volpone* (1665) or, more recently, Widow Blackacre in *The Plain Dealer* (1676). She also played comic parts in tragedies, like Sempronia in Jonson's *Catiline* (1668). Her special “line” included “scolding wives, mothers, governesses, waiting women and bawds” (Wilson 1958: 133). As Michael Yots has observed, when she appears on stage to claim Antony she is portrayed as the nagging wife (1977: 4). She begins by reprimanding Antony for his lack of civility: “Thus long I have attended for my welcome;/Which, as a stranger, sure I might expect./Who am I?” (1984: 3.253–55). She then presents her list of complaints, describing herself as his “much injured wife” (1984: 3.258), unjustly forsaken.

When she undertook serious roles, Mrs. Corey normally acted elderly women. She was about fifteen years older than Elizabeth Boutell and, when both appeared together in a play, Corey was usually cast as Boutell's mother, governess or servant; in *The Rival Queens*, for instance, she was Old Sysigambis, the “mother of the Royal family”—actually grandmother to Boutell's Statira. And if Boutell always played the young heroine “of singular beauty,” Corey was typically given the roles of plain women, devoid of physical graces; a clear example is the character of Strega, in Duffet's *The Amorous Old Woman* (1674)—described in the *Dramatis Personae* as “an old Rich deformed Lady.”

If we keep in mind the contrasting image of these two actresses, the exchange between Cleopatra and Octavia in act 3 of *All for Love* acquires new and poignant meaning. Octavia, placed by Dryden in Alexandria, has claimed and regained Antony; yet, when she meets her rival, she cannot resist the urge to look at her face and make her own assessment of the legendary beauty of the Egyptian queen and the charms that captivated Antony. Cleopatra's words add insult to injury, and the acerbity of the dialogue escalates:

CLEOPATRA

O, you do well to search; for had you known
But half these charms, you had not lost his heart.

OCTAVIA

Far be their knowledge from a Roman Lady,
Far from a modest Wife. Shame of our Sex,
Dost thou not blush, to own those black endearments
That make sin pleasing?

CLEOPATRA

You may blush, who want'em.
If bounteous Nature, if indulgent Heav'n
Have giv'n me charms to please the bravest Man;
Should I not thank'em? Should I be asham'd,
And not be proud? I am, that he has lov'd me;
And, when I love not him, Heav'n change this Face
For one like that. (1984: 3.438-49)

It makes sense that this should be the one scene in the play that Dryden's critics apparently objected to (Preface 41ff). Dryden's contemporaries took Cleopatra's boasting of her beauty and mocking Octavia to be below the dignity of a tragedy. Cleopatra's pride may be dramatically justified by the fact that she is at this point vanquished, and is mustering all her spirit to face her triumphant rival. But her words may have seemed particularly galling, since the age and plainness of the woman playing Octavia appeared too true in the eyes of the audience; this rendered the mockery cruel and ill-natured, very much out of character in a meek Boutell heroine.⁴

Bearing in mind the contrast between Boutell and Corey, and between the character-types they usually played, it is not hard to see why the audience in the opening season could never judge Antony's behaviour as harshly as John Dennis. The Cleopatra they saw did not at all resemble the "loose abandon'd Prostitute" Dennis condemns; their Octavia, though virtuous, was not the "young, affectionate . . . charming" creature he associates with this role. No set of three adjectives could be farther removed from their impression of Mrs. Corey. Her Octavia could at best appear dignified, but would almost inevitably

4. The scene is clearly modelled on a similar confrontation between Statira and Roxana in act 3 of Lee's *The Rival Queens*, which did not attract particular criticism. In this encounter Statira is, like Cleopatra, defeated, and reflects on her rival's beauty and seducing charms (1970: 3.187-94); Roxana replies mocking Statira and her "sickly virtue" (1970: 3.211). Statira, played by Boutell, is incensed by Roxana's taunts and eventually casts off her meekness: "I am by love a fury made, like you" (1970: 3.254); she goes as far as to threaten Roxana (1970: 3.261-63), but does not descend to direct insult, as Roxana had done.

retain a tinge of the shrew. To the eyes of those watching the play in 1677, if any character approached the description Dennis gives for Octavia, it was precisely Cleopatra.

The strategy marked by the casting in this original production of *All for Love*, which firmly directs the flow of sympathy to the tragic lovers and invites the audience to suspend judgement on their actions, is one that should be read against the immediate background of the mid-1670s. The story of Antony had traditionally been used to illustrate the dangers of intemperance in great men. Plutarch, for instance, uses his parallel lives of Demetrius and Antony as examples of men who were both “insolent in prosperity, and abandoned themselves to luxury and enjoyment” (Perrin 1959: 337). But whereas Demetrius never allowed his pleasures to endanger his more serious pursuits, Antony neglected everything to follow his passions; he “was often disarmed by Cleopatra, subdued by her spells, and persuaded to drop from his hands great undertakings and necessary campaigns, only to roam about and play with her on the sea-shores by Canopus and Taphosiris” (Perrin 1959: 337–39). The parallel with the dissolute court of Charles II suggests itself easily, not only in the figure of the ruler who is more prone to indulge his pleasures than to attend affairs of state; the parallel extends to the king’s relationship with his chief mistress, the French Louise de Keroualle, who was in good measure made responsible for Charles’s unpopular pro-French policy. Indeed, a few months before Dryden produced *All for Love*, Sir Charles Sedley had used the theme of Antony and Cleopatra on the stage to present a critical portrait of the English monarch. As N. J. Andrew pointed out, Sedley criticizes Charles II “by drawing analogies between his way of life and that of Antony, whose overriding passion for Cleopatra leads to tyrannical misgovernment” (1975: xvi).⁵ Dryden’s work has been seen as an attempt to neutralize this image of the monarch.⁶ The play presents Antony as a “hero torn between his nation and a personal life vested in an alien, unpopular mistress” (Hughes 1996: 249), and endeavours to redeem his actions placing them above the judgement of ordinary men. To set Antony’s passion beyond the reach of censure, no strategy could be so effective as to present Cleopatra in the shape of Elizabeth Boutell.

We do not have much information on revivals of the play between the opening season and the end of the century. There are records of productions in 1684, 1686 and 1694, and the printing of new editions in 1692 and 1696 suggests that there were performances also in those years, but no new casts have been preserved. The quartos of 1692 and 1696, as was common practice, give the list of actors of the original production, which were clearly not those acting on these occasions: Hart, for instance, had retired before the union of the theatres in 1682, and Mrs. Boutell was away from the stage for long periods and could only have been available, if at all, for the 1696 performance. The only clue we have as to the casts

5. Derek Hughes presents the parallel in more precise terms: “Actium stands for the Third Dutch War, and the besotted hero is blind to the cunning of his mistress and inept both in his clemency and severity” (1996: 246). Sedley’s play does not present a particularly negative view of the character of Cleopatra; rebellion, though not justified, is presented as understandable.

6. Sedley’s *Antony and Cleopatra* would certainly provide the most immediate point of reference—if not the only one—for the Restoration audience, and would define their view of the tragic lovers. Although Shakespeare’s play may have partly inspired Dryden’s portrayal of the central characters, most of the spectators in 1677 would be unfamiliar with this work. Shakespeare’s tragedy was never staged during the Restoration period, and was only printed as part of the Folio editions of Shakespeare in 1663 and 1664.

of these productions is a letter written by Dryden in 1684, in which he comments on the arrangements for the revival of his play:

. . . for the Actors in the two plays which are to be acted of mine, this winter, I had spoken with Mr. Betterton by chance at the Coffee house the afternoon before I came away: & I believe that the persons were all agreed on, to be just the same you mentiond. Only Octavia was to be Mrs. Buttler, in case Mrs. Cooke were not on the Stage. (Ward 1942: 23-24)⁷

The interesting thing about this letter is not so much the choice of actresses being considered for Octavia—both considerably younger than Mrs. Corey—but the fact that a replacement is being discussed at all. Restoration actors did not usually give up their parts and, of all three protagonists in the original run of the play, Mrs. Corey was the only one who was still active at the time: in 1683 she played the title-character in Ravenscroft's *Dame Dobson*; in 1684, she took the part of Mrs. Trainwell in the revival of Brome's *Northern Lass*, and the supposed mother to Angelline in Southerne's *The Disappointment*. But whatever the circumstances that prompted Mrs. Corey's substitution, it seems clear that Dryden and Betterton were negotiating a fairly different Octavia.

A new performance is recorded in 1701, but again with no indication of the cast. However, in 1704 the play was revived at court, on the occasion of the Queen's birthday, and in this case the list of actors is preserved; it includes Betterton in the part of Antony, Elizabeth Barry as Cleopatra, and Anne Bracegirdle as Octavia. This distribution of roles shows that the characters of Cleopatra and Octavia are being presented to the audience in a very different light. Elizabeth Barry was one of the greatest stars of the time, and was famous for the pathos of her performances; as Cibber says, "in the Art of exciting Pity, she had a Power beyond all the Actresses I have yet seen" (1968: 92). She had already achieved great success in the tragedies of Otway in the early 1680s, especially in the parts of Monimia in *The Orphan* (1680) and Belvidera in *Venice Preserved* (1682).⁸ But, according to Cibber, it was not until the 1690s that she reached full maturity, when she was "not a little, past her Youth" and had already lost most of her beauty—as we can conclude from Cibber's reflection "that the short Life of Beauty, is not long enough to form a complete Actress" (1968: 91). Mrs. Barry was commonly held to be a loose and passionate woman. She had begun her stage career as the mistress of the Earl of Rochester, and was successively associated with Etherege and Sir Henry St John; a satirical poem by Robert Gould, "The Play-House" (c. 1700), draws an infamous picture of the lascivious inclinations attributed to her and sums up her character in the following words: "Messalina like, she treads the Stage/And all Enjoys, but nothing can Asswage" (1709: 259). Although she had initially

7. In the same letter Dryden considers a possible replacement for Boutell in *The Conquest of Granada*, which clearly shows that she was not available at the time. The fact that Dryden does not discuss options for Cleopatra suggests that the part had already been assigned to the rising star of the company, Mrs. Barry.

8. John Downes sets down these two parts, together with that of Isabella in Southerne's *The Fatal Marriage* (1694), as the roles that "gain'd her the Name of Famous Mrs. Barry." Downes praises the power of her acting in terms similar to Cibber's: "for when ever she Acted any of those three Parts, she forc'd Tears from the Eyes of her Auditory, especially those who have any Sense of Pity for the distress'd" (Summers 1928: 37–38).

played young girls, as her reputation mounted Mrs. Barry gradually specialized in the role of the passionate woman: she was Corina, the whore in Aphra Behn's *The Revenge* (1680), the prostitute La Nuche in the second part of *The Rover* (1681), and Lady Galliard in *The City Heiress* (1682). In the 1690s, she also incorporated the villainess: she played Orundana in Settle's *Distressed Innocence* (1690), Cassandra in Dryden's *Cleomenes* (1692), Lady Touchwood in Congreve's *The Double-Dealer* (1693), and Homais in Delariviere Manley's *The Royal Mischief* (1696).

Anne Bracegirdle cut a very different type. She was younger than Barry and was considered a great beauty. Cibber describes her as an actress with an unusual reputation for modesty in her private life:

. . . never any Woman was in such general Favour of her Spectators, which, to the last Scene of her Dramatick Life, she maintain'd by not being unguarded in her private Character. This discretion contributed, not a little, to make her the *Cara*, the Darling of the Theatre . . . And tho' she might be said to have been the Universal Passion, and under the highest Temptations; her Constancy in resisting them, serv'd but to increase the number of her Admirers. (1968: 97)

In keeping with her personal reputation, Mrs. Bracegirdle was typecast as the young and chaste heroine. She played the virtuous Mirtilla in Dufrey's *Love for Money* (1691), the noble Fulvia in his *Richmond Heiress* (1693), and created all the major roles in the comedies of Congreve: she was Araminta in *The Old Bachelor* (1693), Cynthia in *The Double-Dealer* (1693), Angelica in *Love for Love* (1695), and Millamant in *The Way of the World* (1700). Since the 1690s, she and Mrs. Barry had often appeared together in a long series of tragedies in which Barry typically acted the villainess or "darker woman," Bracegirdle the innocent heroine; it was Bracegirdle, for instance, who played Statira in the revivals of *The Rival Queens*, with Barry as Roxana. That the contrasting reputations of these two actresses could impress themselves on their characters and condition the audience's response to them is suggested by an anecdote recorded by the 18th-century critic William Chetwood in 1749. According to Chetwood, when Barry played Cordelia in Tate's *King Lear* (1681), the line "Arm'd in my virgin innocence I'll fly" provoked the laughter of the audience, turning a scene "of Generous Pity and Compassion" ridiculous;⁹ but when Mrs. Bracegirdle succeeded her in that role (1706), her rendering of the same line was applauded, "more as a Reward for her reputable character than, perhaps, her Acting claim'd" (Howe 1992: 103).

The contrast between the "lines" and the private characters of Mrs. Barry and Mrs. Bracegirdle must obviously have influenced the audience's perception of Cleopatra and Octavia in this production. For all Barry's power to move pity and "admiration" for the "noble love of Cleopatra" (Cibber 1968: 92), she could not as easily as Boutell assume the image of artless innocence. For the theatre-going public of the time, she was every inch the seductress. Thus, in Gildon's *A Comparison between the Two Stages* (1702), the speakers refer to Mrs. Barry by the name of Cleopatra, and draw the expected parallel between the actress and the role:

9. The quotation is slightly inaccurate. Tate's text reads: "Bold in my Virgin Innocence I'll flie/My Royal Father to Relieve, or Die" (3.1: 28).

By that Nickname [Cleopatra], so unfortunate to poor Anthony as the other has been to many an honest Country Gentleman, I shou'd guess whom you mean . . . In her time she has been the very Spirit of Action every way; Nature made her for the delight of Mankind; and till Nature began to decay in her, all the Town shar'd her Bounty. (1942: 13)

In the 1704 play, virtue and innocence would inevitably be associated with the character played by Bracegirdle. Her Octavia must have perfectly fitted the image of the “young, affectionate, virtuous, charming wife” recalled by Dennis, whose wrongs could understandably provoke moral indignation. The audience may have been invited to admire the love of Cleopatra and to pity her fate, but the casting of Bracegirdle as Octavia suggests that moral values were being clearly defined in this production, and that virtue—embodied by Octavia—was definitely shown as more attractive.

The change of perspective is clearly reflected in the prologue written by Congreve for this performance. It states that “Virtue and Heroick Fame” are the only subjects appropriate for the tragic muse, which will from this point on eschew all immorality:

No more in mean Disguise she shall appear
 And Shapes she wou'd reform be forc'd to wear

 Henceforth she shall pursue a nobler Task,
 Shew her bright Virgin Face, and scorn the Satyr's Mask. (1928: 4-12)

Whereas poets had often justified the representation of vice in their plays as necessary to satire, Congreve's prologue denounces this claim as a subterfuge adopted by playwrights to introduce ribald material in their works. It proclaims the end of this practice and hails the advent of a new era in which the stage will imitate the Court and make virtue reign supreme:

Happy her future Days! which are design'd
 Alone to paint the Beauties of the Mind.
 By just Originals to draw with Care,
 And Copy from the Court a Faultless Fair. (1928: 13-16)

Far from justifying adultery—as Dryden's original prologue largely did—this text is primarily a celebration of virtue, and of the monarch's embodiment of this value. Like the new cast, the new prologue reveals a change in the conception of the play, one which brings it in line with the more sober morals promoted by the crown after the Glorious Revolution.

The different casting strategies deployed in these two productions of *All for Love* show that the tragedy is built on different premises on each occasion. In the opening season, the casting of Elizabeth Boutell in the role of Cleopatra boldly placed the adulterous mistress at the moral centre of the play, turning her into an innocent heroine, while Katherine Corey brought the injured wife close to the character of the shrew. If this first production could be said to condone the libertine ethos of the 1670s, when the play was revived in 1704 the choice of actresses reveals a totally different strategy: the pairing of Anne Bracegirdle as Octavia with Elizabeth Barry as Cleopatra indicates that it is the forsaken wife who is now identified as the heroine; her wrongs make the punishment that poetic justice demands for the tragic lovers appear indeed like justice, and firmly draw the sympathies

of the audience to virtue, not vice. Thus, the new cast not only redefines the characters and the relationships between them but, in doing so, also revises the moral of the play. As the contrast between these two productions of *All for Love* shows, type-casting could be used as a powerful instrument to construct meaning on the Restoration stage.

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