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DISPLACING THE BOURGEOIS IDEAL:

SUSANNAH CENTLIVRE AND FEMALE FRIENDSHIP

By

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For Aunt Ruth, Grandma, and Mom

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ABSTRACT

This thesis discusses female friendship in three plays, by a prolific dramatist of eighteenth century England, Susannah Centlivre. I extend recent feminist criticism of Centlivre through an in depth analysis of how female friendship transforms patriarchal institutions. I argue that Centlivre's writing reconstructs the emergent bourgeois ideal that supported fraternity and found women to be weak and emotionally unstable. I examine female friendship throughout *The Beau's Duel, The Wonder! A Woman Keeps a Secret,* and *The Artifice* to show that Centlivre's radical feminist writing creates agency, for women, through friendship.

INTRODUCTION

Susanna Centlivre, whose writing career spanned from 1700 to 1722, produced nineteen plays, which made her one of the most prolific playwrights in the early eighteenth century. Her most popular plays were *The Gamester* (1705), *The Busybody* (1709), *The Wonder: A Woman Keeps a Secret* (1714), and *A Bold Stroke for a Wife* (1718). Out of her nineteen plays, seventeen were comedies and two tragicomedies, *The Perjured Husband* and *The Stolen Heiress*. Centlivre's early life is a bit of a mystery; sources have trouble pinpointing exactly what she was doing prior to her writing career. She is said to have joined a traveling band of strolling players at sixteen, and shortly thereafter, to have dressed as a boy and attended the University of Cambridge, with the help of Anthony Hammond. After her escapades as a youth, she married three times, finally settling with Joseph Centlivre, a cook for the Queen.

Centlivre began writing prior to her marriage to Joseph Centlivre, and critics speculate that she started writing because of financial needs. Her first plays, *The Perjured Husband* (1700), *The Beau's Duel* (1701), *The Stolen Heiress* (1702), and *Love's Contrivance* (1703) had minimal success. With her fourth play, *The Gamester* (1705), Centlivre finally had an enormous success, and she maintained the theme of gambling for her next play, *The Basset Table* (1705). Following the success of *The Gamester* and *The Basset Table,* Centlivre continued writing for the theater until her death in 1723. Throughout her prolific career, Centlivre dealt with many of the prevalent issues of her day, including marriage, manners, women, love, and relationships. She explored aspects of marriage such as parental control, money matters, and wife/husband relations consistently throughout her popular plays.

Despite her popularity in her own day, early twentieth century critics dismissed her plays for a number of reasons related to the assumption that Centlivre's "primary aim was to entertain her contemporaries" (Lock 132). These early twentieth century critics, including F.P. Lock, John Wilson Bowyer, F.W. Bateson, and Richard Frushell, agree that Centlivre's desire to entertain audiences is her main flaw. F. P. Lock suggests that Centlivre wrote to the "'improved' moral tone of the times," which he believes consequently demonstrates her longing to please audiences (133). Similarly, critic John Wilson Bowyer contends, "she wished to enjoy audience applause" (250).

F.W. Bateson and Richard Frushell find further evidence within their respective readings to support Lock's and Bowyer's conclusions. From play to play, they suggest her use of similar characters, such as foppish old men, handsome suitors, and women who must persuade guardians to let them marry, demonstrates not only her desire to entertain but also her lack of intellect / wit. For example, F.W. Bateson writes, "the characterization… is conventional and superficial"; therefore the writing has "no intellectual or literary significance" (Bratton 10). Furthermore, Frushell also remarks that "She saw herself much more as a mirror than a lamp, a playwright mostly interested in stage fame for her works" (16). Frushell is suggesting by this remark that Centlivre simply reflected the desire of the audience. She did not create her own light as a lamp does, he implies; instead, she observed the theater-goers and designed her plays to fit their needs. Since Centlivre was simply mimicking the theater patrons, her plays, according to such critics, were unable to reflect anything other than the desires and manners of a typical 1700s audience. Overall, early critics see Centlivre's plays as lighthearted comedies of manners that lack a literary focus and intellect because of her desire to entertain theater patrons.

While conceding that Centlivre wrote for typical audiences of the early eighteenth century, recent critics have chosen to portray Centlivre in a way that emphasizes her ability to create agency for her female characters, and they have also tended to view her plays as progressive and female oriented. For example, Patsy Fowler suggests that Centlivre chastised, "the male-dominated English culture through both covert and more overt methods, while still adhering to the dramatic conventions that assured success for the playwright" (54). Fowler acknowledges Centlivre's ambitions to please the audience, but she emphasizes the ability of the female characters to transform stereotypical roles by making their own decisions. Fowler also asserts that through gambling in *The Basset Table*, women are able to "challenge male authority and outwit the male characters" (56).

Two other recent critics, Antonella Rigamonti and Laura Favero Carrero, also take a feminist look at Centlivre through the realm of gambling. Rigamonti and Carrero write, "Centlivre's 'feminist individualism' is […] not limited; it is enormously amplified by the absolute, albeit fictitious, equality created by the alternative rules of the basset table and all it stands for" (60). Gambling, according to Rigamonti and Carrero, allows female characters to establish their own space, where they can maneuver within the boundaries of patriarchy. They thus argue for a depiction of women in Centlivre's plays that gives women an individual voice

and individual freedoms, uncovering a more radical aspect in her work that the earlier critics had overlooked.

The recent criticism of Suz-Anne Kinney furthers the feminist discussion of Centlivre, by focusing on the middle of her plays. A space is created in the middle of her plays, contends Kinney, where women's voices are heard, where they are able to make their own decisions and critique social conventions. One way for this critique to occur, Kinney points out, is through a reversal of the stereotypical characterizations of women. Instead of being characterized as weak and emotional, the women are depicted as strong, witty, and intellectual; they become able individuals who can make decisions on their own, active agents in their lives (Kinney 10).

Kinney's concept of positive space occurring throughout the middle section of Centlivre's plays, overlaps with the view of many other recent feminist critics, including Margo Collins. A positive space is opened for Miranda in *The Busybody*, asserts Collins, because she is able to recognize changes in how marriage contracts are created. Miranda is able to negotiate, according to Collins, because she realizes, "the instability of interpretations, both of the written and of the spoken word" (183). Collins also remarks that throughout *The Busybody* Miranda negotiates her needs by demonstrating an understanding of writing and interpreting. By understanding how to interpret, Miranda is able to triumph over her overbearing and controlling father, demonstrating what Collins declares "the elimination of power" of parental control over marriage (185). Recent feminist critics, then, have all acknowledged a concept within Centlivre's plays that portray a positive space for women. Each of the critics, consequently open a new way to understand Centlivre's plays through their feminist lens.

In this thesis I will attempt to further the discussion opened up by feminist critics, through an exploration of female friendship in these plays: *The Beau's Duel* (1701), *The Wonder* (1714), and *The Artifice* (1720). I will argue that female friendship opens up a separate space where women characters can create solidarity and consequently agency. One of the first critics of female friendship, Virginia Woolf, in *A Room of One's Own,* decries the lack of true female friendship in literature. According to Woolf, female friendship in literary history was non-existent. Specifically, she writes that the confidante, the individual who furthered the plot, was the only demonstration of any positive interaction between women. Woolf concludes,

> All these relationships between women, I thought, rapidly recalling the splendid gallery of fictitious women, are too simple. So much has been

> left out, unattempted. And I tried to remember any cause in the course of my reading where two women are represented as friends… They are now and then mothers and daughters. But almost without exception they are shown in relation to men. (143)

Recently, however, in her book *Female Friendship,* Janet Todd argues against Woolf, citing a variety of female friendships in literature. Todd divides female friendship into five categories: sentimental, erotic, manipulative, political, and social. For the purpose of this thesis, the political and social categories are the most important. Todd defines political friendship as requiring "some action against the social system, its institutions or conventions" (4). When friendship forces recognition of patriarchal institutions that treat women unfairly, then, Todd considers the friendship a political one. The institution of marriage, she also argues, is one issue that is often questioned and examined, within the political friendship. For example, Todd writes that in Wollstonecrafts's, *The Wrongs of Woman,* Maria battles the institution of the asylum where she is locked up and she is able to escape through her friend Jemima. The other category of friendship that is pertinent to Centlivre is social friendship, which Todd defines as, "a nurturing tie, not pitting women against society but rather smoothing their passage within it… Here the support and acceptance of other women is essential…women aid and sustain each other" (4). The category of social friendship is different from the political because the two women help each other within society and within institutions of patriarchy. For example, Todd writes, when Jane Austin's Emma teaches Harriet how to interact in "polite society" by showing her social manners, she is displaying social friendship.

Todd insinuates that there is room for these two categories to overlap; however, she never explicitly explains how and seems leery of viewing social and political friendships together. I suggest that it is the often repeated overlap of the social and political friendship in Centlivre's plays that ultimately unsettles the male characters and allows for female agency. Todd's definition of social friendships fits many female friendships in Centlivre's plays because, as I will point out, female friendships work within institutions of patriarchy. However, Centlivre's friendships work to transform the institutions as well. Centlivre's female friendships revolutionize Todd's binary division of social and political, so the social becomes political. Through socio-political relationships, Centlivre's women create bonds that challenge the institution of patriarchy in a new solidarity based on sorority.

This new ideal of sorority that surfaces in Centlivre's plays coincides interestingly with a major change in the social structure of England after the Glorious Revolution of 1688 – a change that involved the idea of fraternity. In *The Sexual Contract*, Carole Pateman describes the emergence of the bourgeois ideology of fraternity and brotherhood in this period. She writes, "The revolution in which the slogan *'liberté, egalité, fraternité'* was proclaimed began in 1789, but the alliance between the three elements was forged much earlier. Modern patriarchy is fraternal in form and the original contract is a fraternal pact" (Pateman 77). Kinship was no longer the dominant social structure in the order that emerged after 1688. Instead, the social order was determined by a 'universal' brotherhood, a new ideology that came from the ideal, in Lockean contract theory, that all men are created equal.

As Pateman also writes, the new contract secured masculine right even as the paternal right was defeated, giving us modern patriarchy. As this new ideology emerged, women were excluded from the social contract. It was argued that women had a "propensity to disorder" and were unable to make any kind of judgments that would help the greater good of society (Pateman 98). More specifically, according to Pateman's analysis, it was thought that, "Women lack the capacity to sublimate their passion and are a perpetual source of disorder, so they must 'be subjected either to a man or to the judgments of men and they are never permitted to put themselves above these judgments" (98). Passion and rampant emotions, in this mindset, perpetually possess women; therefore, due to their lack of control over emotions, women could not make reasonable judgments. Because of this notion of weakness and vulnerability in women's decision-making skills, the new ideal of fraternity relegated women to the household. Pateman notes, "women were deprived of an economic basis for independence by the separation of the workplace from the household and the consolidation of the patriarchal structure of capitalism" (90). Thus women were completely dependent on men for provision of livelihood. The contract of fraternity implicitly portrayed women as illogical, and consequently unable to make decisions for the greater good of society; therefore, the household became their world.

Throughout her plays Susannah Centlivre implicitly challenges this bourgeois ideology, demonstrating female agency through female friendship and women's ability to act not only for other women but also for society as a whole. I will argue in this thesis that the female bonds established by Susannah Centlivre in her plays demonstrate an awareness of a positive place where women can find agency. Centlivre's new ideal of sorority transforms the ideal of

fraternity prevalent after the Glorious Revolution of 1688. The bonds established between the women, I will also show, are horizontal as well as vertical; they form equality between women similar to that of the "brotherhood." Through female friendship, the women characters force the men to acknowledge their social and political positions, as well as force them to accept women as individuals capable of making decisions. These decisions are facilitated through Centlivre's portrayal of female characters as strong, bold, courageous, and active, thus emphasizing the ability of women to triumph over the ideal of fraternity.

Many other playwrights of the 1700s insisted on portraying stereotypical female characters; however, Centlivre transforms the traditional role of her female characters, giving them agency through solidarity. In *The Beau's Duel, The Wonder,* and *The Artifice* the female friendships teach survival (social friendships) and create power (political friendships). In Chapter 2, I will examine *The Beau's Duel,* one of Centlivre's early plays in which two women, Clarinda and Emilia, prove the importance and relevancy of female friendship. In Chapter 3, I will look at *The Wonder! A Woman Keeps a Secret,* one of Centlivre's most popular plays in which Violante creates a lasting friendship with Isabella through repeated examples of self sacrifice. In Chapter 4, I will explore *The Artifice,* where a number of female friendships develop to challenge not only traditional female roles of the subservient women but also the dominant patriarchal norms of the 1700s.

In order to show how progressive Centlivre's plays are, however, I will first look at Nicholas Rowe's, *The Fair Penitent* (1714), in Chapter 1. Rowe portrays two opposite women Calista and Lavinia who fit stereotypical bourgeois female roles. Calista is emotionally unstable, angry, and depressed, whereas, Lavinia is the perfect wife and daughter, always following the wishes of her guardians. The play also consistently promotes a rigid bourgeois doctrine that emphasizes the social importance of fraternity. Female friendship is nonexistent in the play; instead, moral competition between the women is encouraged. An analysis of Rowe will allow me to contrast the different characterizations of women and female friendship, thereby further illustrating Centlivre's radical feminist ideal.

CHAPTER 1

The Fair Penitent

The Fair Penitent (1703), by Nicholas Rowe, was one of the most successful English plays of the eighteenth century. In fact, it was the sixth most frequently performed tragedy between 1703 and 1776. The play is often categorized as a "she-tragedy" due to the tragic heroine, Calista. A "she-tragedy" is characterized by a "new kind of heroine whose victimization provides the essential material of the plot" (Brown 429). Calista, in fact, is the catalyst for all of the tragedy that occurs. She disregards her father Sciolto's wishes for her to marry Altamont, and instead she passionately yearns for a forbidden man, Lothario. The consummation of her love for Lothario incurs the anger of Sciolto and her brother, Horatio. Through her disgrace, she inadvertently kills her father, wounds Altamont and Horatio, and ultimately perishes by her own hand. In contrast to Calista, the character of Lavinia, Horatio's wife, portrays the stereotypical characteristics of the ideal woman; importantly, her sole concern is for the welfare of her husband.

In this chapter, I will examine the relationships between Horatio and Altamont and Calista and Lavinia because they portray the normative standard of the new bourgeois ideology. By showing typical relationships of the period, I will then be able to contrast them with Centlivre's more progressive female friendship. The friendship between Horatio and Altamont I will align with Pateman's argument regarding the emergence of contract theory and subsequently, the ideal of fraternity. In contrast, I will examine the non-existent friendship between Calista and Lavinia. After looking at this lack of friendship, I will examine Rowe's stereotypical characterizations of the two women, which also coincides with Pateman's analysis of the bourgeois concept of women. Ultimately, Calista must be defeated because she represents problematic female behavior within the new political bourgeois ideology, and Lavinia must be idolized because she represents the new ideal of the passive woman.

The rise of the passive woman who spends her time within the household coincides historically with the rise of the ideal of fraternity. In *The Fair Penitent,* not only is the stereotype of the passive woman encouraged but, importantly, the three male characters also sustain the bourgeois ideology through the portrayal of friendship. Rowe demonstrates his understanding of

the new ideal through the brotherhood characterized in the relationships between Horatio, Altamont, and Sciolto. The play opens with Horatio and Altamont expressing gratitude to Sciolto for rescuing them from the destruction created by the warring families. "O great Sciolto! … Let me not live but at thy very name / My eager heart springs up and leaps with joy" (1.1.19-21).[i] Through Sciolto's beneficence, Altamont and Horatio have gained back their original positions of status in the state. The war had left Altamont's father "stripped … bare" without "ev'n a grave" and Altamont was undone "sinking with his ruin" (1.1.42-43). But Sciolto recognized Altamont's impoverished situation and decided to offer support. He raised Altamont from destruction and despair, placing him back into his original rank, and this allowed a reestablishment of order and solidification of friendship between the two men.

The help that Sciolto offered to Horatio is also pertinent to the establishment of the brotherhood that we see here. Horatio while speaking with Altamont says, "So open, so unbounded was his goodness, / It reached ev'n me, because I was thy friend" (1.1.30-31). Horatio was rescued because of his friendship with Altamont. Male friendship, then, early in the play becomes a reigning virtue. The destruction and poverty created by the warring families end through Sciolto's reconstruction of the original economic and political status of Horatio and Altamont. Altamont recognizes Sciolto's benevolence and says he is "the author of my happiness" (1.1.60). Not only is order restored through Sciolto but the benefits of fraternity begin to surface. The emergent bourgeois political ideology, it could be argued, gains recognition and acceptance through the fraternity established at the onset of the play.

The link among the three men is further strengthened through the exchange of women and wealth. Unfortunate circumstances caused Altamont's family to become impoverished; shortly thereafter, however, Sciolto takes Altamont under his wing and cements their friendship by giving Altamont his daughter, Calista. Another exchange too is discovered in the opening of the play when Horatio and Altamont are engaged in conversation. Horatio says to Altamont, "When that great man I loved, thy noble father,/ Bequeathed thy gentle sister to my arms,/ His last dear pledge and legacy of friendship" (1.1.30-34). The ideal of friendship is thus asserted through the exchange of Lavinia as well, and Horatio through brotherly love for Altamont's father establishes ties to Altamont. The three men are inextricably linked through the exchange of Lavinia and Calista; they form strong bonds of solidarity.

The fraternity is also illustrated through Horatio's actions of self-sacrifice for Altamont in Act II. Earlier on in the play, Horatio is privy to an exchange between Lothario and Lucilla, Calista's woman, during which he learns of Calista's love for Lothario, and his immediate response is, "Fire and sulpher, / Hell is the sole avenger of such crimes" (1.1.298-299). Horatio also immediately sympathizes with Altamont's betrayal and pain, and he is afraid for "the gentle Altamont" who he thinks shall "droop and hang his discontented head" upon learning of Calista's disgrace (1.1.302, 304). The desperation Horatio feels at the new found knowledge transforms into physical side effects such as "sharpest convulsions" and "pangs of the soul" plague him, and he labors "beneath this load of thought" (1.1.342, 344, 345). Unsure of what his best course of action is, Horatio says, "It were unjust; no, let me spare my friend, / Lock up the fatal secret in my breast, / Nor tell him that which will undo his quite" (1.1. 330-332). Initially, Horatio decides to keep the truth from Altamont in order to spare him the torment.

However, after dwelling for some time on his information, Horatio, later in Act II asks, "What if, while all here intent on reveling, / I privately went forth and sought Lothario" (2.1.154-155). He decides to take matters into his own hands and confront Lothario, hoping to preserve Altamont's honor. Horatio enters the scene while Lothario and Rossano (Lothario's friend) are in the midst of a discussion, and he begins to berate Lothario, "I hold thee base enough / To break through law, and spurn at sacred order, / And do a brutal injury like this" (2.2. 69-71). Horatio recognizes his duty, as a friend, to do all in his power to restore Altamont's honor. Lothario and Horatio continue to exchange angry threats, until Horatio, suffering from rage at the insensibility of Lothario to disgrace Altamont, also decides to draw his sword. Horatio, it is evident, will sacrifice his life to preserve the honor of Altamont; thus, the bonds of friendship between them are further solidified. Horatio's desire to protect his friend leads him to willingly move the confrontation to a later time at which presumably he would kill Lothario and restore Altamont's honor. Not only Altamont's honor, but the honor of the institution of marriage is disrupted by Lothario's actions. Thus, through the proposed duel, Horatio will maintain the ideal of friendship, ultimately benefiting Altamont, the brotherhood, and Calista. The benefits reaped extend not only to the individual, then, but to society as a whole.

The brotherhood established in Act I and II, between Horatio and Altamont, begins to deteriorate in Act III. Throughout this deterioration, however, the importance of the bourgeois ideal of fraternity surfaces; the far-reaching consequences of the deterioration further emphasize

the need for a sustained brotherhood. Ultimately, livelihood, wealth, and marriage begin to fail as fraternity fails. Horatio, doing his duty as a trusted friend, tries to warn Altamont of Calista's love for Lothario: "she has ruined thee" and "she has undone thee," he states (3.1.240-41). Altamont transgresses the limits of friendship when he refuses to acknowledge Horatio's claims. Altamont begins to question their friendship, "It is too much for friendship to allow thee" (3.1.253). He is blinded by his love for Calista and he refuses to see the truth. Altamont becomes enraged and threatens Horatio: "To urge me but a minute more is fatal" (3.1.293). Horatio cannot comprehend Altamont's actions and responds with, "Spite of my wrongs, my heart runs o'er with tenderness, / And I could rather die myself than hurt him" (3.1.302-03). The action continues to escalate with Altamont's rage becoming more visible; Horatio though, tries to remain calm and supportive. He explains, "I love thee still, ungrateful as thou art, And must and will preserve thee from dishonor, Ev'n in despite of thee" (3.1.286-288). Although Horatio continues to plead with Altamont to recognize the truth about Calista, Altamont refuses and strikes Horatio. Out of self defense Horatio draws, and they begin to battle. Lavinia steps into the scene and forces the two men apart. Horatio, after calming down, realizes Altamont's transgression against the brotherhood and says, "'Twas such a sin to friendship as heaven's mercy,/ That strives with man's untoward, monstrous wickedness, Unwearied with forgiving, scarce could pardon./ He who was all to me, child, brother, friend!" (3.1.328-331). Horatio, through his language, portrays the rupture of friendship. Altamont does so as well when he calls Horatio an "ungrateful friend" and "cruel brother" (3.1.360). Through the dialogue between the two men, it is evident that both feel the other has transgressed. The fraternity has witnessed its first obstacle and both men slowly begin to understand the consequences of the break.

After the rupture of friendship, Altamont learns the truth about Calista. He feels the loss of Horatio's friendship and moans, "I am sick of many sorrows; / … my easy heart is breaking" (4.1.223-24). The friendship is of such importance Altamont says, "I have not, since we parted, been at peace, / Nor known one joy sincere" (4. 1.351-52). He can think of nothing besides the pain at the loss of Horatio. Altamont's internal fears surface when he meets up with Horatio. He realizes, "'Tis lost, 'tis gone, his soul is quite estranged, / And knows me for its counterpart no more" (4.1.321-22). The pain he suffers is evident throughout his rhetoric; he cannot survive without the companionship of Horatio. Altamont pleads forgiveness, but Horatio refuses to acknowledge him at first. Altamont, due to his excessive despair faints; when he revives he says,

> I fain would set all right with thee,
> Make up this most unlucky breach, and then,
> With thine and heav'n's forgiveness on my soul,
> Shrink to my grave, and be at ease forever. (4.1.408-11)

Altamont cannot rest in peace unless Horatio offers his forgiveness. Altamont's language of despair makes Horatio realize his pain, and he says, "I cannot speak! I love, forgive, and pity thee!"(4.1.404). Through this scene two important lessons are learned: firstly, male friendship is essential to society functioning smoothly, and secondly, the good intentions of a friend are not to be doubted. Altamont's lapse in judgment portrays the consequences of not trusting in the fraternity, which benefits all of society.

At the end of the play the bonds are reasserted, once again, among the men when Sciolto dies and the exchange of wealth takes place. As he is dying Sciolto says, "To thee [Altamont] and brave Horatio I bequeath / My fortunes" (5.1.272-273). While Altamont and Horatio are not his sons, they still receive his wealth; therefore, the emphasis is on fraternity not paternity, which is evident in the emergent new bourgeois ideal. Transfer of wealth, not only women, the play demonstrates, takes place through the friendships. The monetary benefits will considerably improve the financial status of Horatio and Altamont.

Not only is the ideal of fraternity demonstrated through the actions of Altamont, Horatio, and Sciolto but this ideal is also supported through Lavinia's actions. For example, in the midst of the fight between Horatio and Altamont regarding Calista, Lavinia suggests they take her life, "O' turn your cruel swords upon Lavinia!" (3.1.310). Lavinia enters at the perfect moment during the duel – right before any serious injury comes to either. Her demonstration of self-sacrifice is in the name of the fraternity. She begs Altamont to "speak one gentle word to *your* Horatio," and continues pleading, "he longs to love you, / to call you friend" (3.1.343-45). Lavinia's language and offer of assistance helps to uphold the ideal of fraternity. She recognizes how problematic the rupture is and extols the benefits of reestablishing the friendship; therefore, her support enforces the new bourgeois ideology and the ideal of fraternity.

Besides helping Altamont and Horatio to reconcile, Lavinia also embodies the new ideal of the passive women through her support of Horatio. In a recent assessment of early eighteenth century drama, Laura Brown notes the increasingly prevalent character of the passive woman on stage in contrast to the Restoration women who were depicted as "passionate and ambitious"

(429). The rise in status of middle class tradesman, Brown argues, is one reason for the new ideal women. Wives, according to Brown, were no longer useful in their husbands' shops; hence, the "idle" wife became a symbol of status (439). As the social contract was changing because of the bourgeois ideology, the stage responded with female roles of "passivity and stasis" (Brown 432).

Lavinia acts according to the new model of the passive woman. For example, when Horatio learns of Calista's love for Lothario, Lavinia immediately perceives his anguish and attempts to soothe him. Lavinia says, "Since now you mourn unkindly by yourself, / And rob me of my partnership of sadness?" (1.1.349-350). She wants to sustain Horatio through his time of trouble and offers to "weep out part of [his] misfortunes" (1.1.367). Lavinia feels that Horatio is not allowing her to be a part of his pain; she wants to help Horatio cope with his sadness by letting her share in his emotion. Lavinia's love and support of Horatio is again portrayed in Act III, when Horatio despairs after the fight with Altamont. Lavinia says, "Yes, I will thee, forsake for thee / My country, brother, friends, ev'n all I have" (3.1.391-92). Through such expressions of self-sacrifice, she helps to characterize the new ideal woman. Her role helps to sanction the new political bourgeois ideal.

In contrast to Lavinia's passivity and subservience, Calista is argumentative and disobedient. Her only concern is for her failing love affair with Lothario, and her obsession with Lothario begins, early in the play, to take control of her mind. This loss of control serves to illustrate why she should have respected Sciolto's wishes. Upon realizing that Lothario is not interested in marrying her, she falls into depression and despair, and cries, "My dear peace of mind is lost forever" (2.1.8). Her mental state progressively worsens, and she becomes emblematic of the typical bourgeois women, who as Pateman noted, were characterized as emotionally unstable and as lacking "the capacity to sublimate their passion," and who hence existed in "a perpetual source of disorder" (98). Calista's despair comes to a climax in Act V and she says,

> I have turned my eyes inward upon myself,
> Where foul offense and shame have laid all waste;
> Therefore my soul abhors the wretched dwelling,
> And longs to find some better place of rest. (5.1.87-90)

She is no longer concerned with the world; instead, all she can think about is her shame and the death she thinks she deserves. Through the above example, it is evident the play suggests that had Calista obeyed her father's demands and peacefully married Altamont, all the tragedy could have been avoided.

By the end of the play Calista has also descended into a state of complete mental chaos. She begins to hallucinate and wails, "For thee my secret soul each hour arraigns me" (4.1.91) and "it haunts me" (4.1.93). Her disobedience to her father and husband torments her. Her actions have brought disgrace to Altamont, Horatio, and Sciolto. Once she recognizes the consequences of her actions and the pain she caused, the only option is to kill herself. She says, "I am all contagion, death, and ruin" (5.1.232). The only way she can find peace, she thinks, is through death. Moments later she cries, "thus, thus I set thee free" and stabs herself (5.1.234). While dying she receives forgiveness from her father and asks Altamont to think "not too hardly of me when I'm gone" (5.1.259). In her last breath she cries, "Mercy, heav'n!" (5.1.264). Her death signals the end of disorder. Calista, then, becomes "the fair penitent" because before her death she is able to acknowledge her transgression and ask forgiveness. All of the pain and suffering could have been prevented, the play suggests, if she had only acted similarly to Lavinia and assumed the role of the subservient, passive woman.

Not once throughout Calista's growing despair does Lavinia try to sympathize with her suffering. Instead she is constantly offering some new piece of advice that implies learning a moral lesson from Calista. For example, during the discussion between Lavinia and Horatio, she sets up the contrast between her and Calista by extolling her own personal worth. Lavinia says, "If women are such things, / How was I formed so different from my sex? My little heart is satisfied with you" (1.1.394-396). Lavinia is referring to Calista's refusal to be satisfied with Altamont and to the discord she creates by loving Lothario. Lavinia wants Horatio to know that she is completely satisfied; more importantly, the play seems to indicate that all woman should recognize Lavinia's worth and attempt to model themselves after her. She recognizes her duty to her husband and fulfills the role of the passive wife perfectly. She cannot understand how any woman would act differently from her. Through Lavinia's rhetoric, she contrasts herself to Calista and also portrays the new bourgeois idealization of the model woman.

The contrast is further illustrated when, at the end of Act IV, Lavinia offers to immortalize Calista's disgrace by perpetually revisiting the tragedy.

> Think not but we will share in all thy woes;
> We'll sit all day and tell sad tales of love,
> And when we light upon some faithless woman,
> Some beauty, like Calista, false and fair,
> We'll fix our grief and our complaining there;
> We'll curse the nymph that drew the ruin on,
> And mourn the youth that was like thee undone. (4.1.419-425)

Through Lavinia's accusatory tone here a number of aspects of the play become apparent. First, Lavinia's disdain for Calista permeates the quote and solidifies the notion that women cannot be friends, especially through her language of dislike as she refers to Calista as "false." This would have been a perfect opportunity for Lavinia to offer support or sympathy to Calista. Instead, all Lavinia can do is fix her "grief" and "complaining" on Calista. Lavinia also foreshadows Calista's imminent death through her language. She speaks as if Calista has already died indicating that she understands that Calista must perish because she is problematic to the fraternity and the institution of marriage. Calista thus signifies for Lavinia a lesson to all women who want to deviate from the new passive woman model. A woman who does not obey the desires of her father will inevitably fall into ruin, as explained by Lavinia. Calista is an example for all; her story will be told and retold, according to Lavinia, to ensure that women remember how not to behave.

Lavinia helps to maintain the institution of marriage in this speech and throughout the play. Her hostility toward Calista stems not only from Calista's love for Lothario but also because Calista disrupts the institution of marriage. Calista does not follow what has been deemed her rightful path – to marry Altamont. The Epilogue, cleverly spoken by the actress who played Lavinia, continues to assert the importance of morality: "Dearly she paid for breach of good behavior" (Epi. 2). The Epilogue ends with a warning to always respect the patriarchal institution of marriage and hold it in revere. "Lampoons shall cease, and envious scandal die, / And all shall live in peace, like my good man and I" (Epi. 35-36). Lavinia's example, the play suggests, is the model for the perfect marriage within the new political bourgeois ideology.

On all levels, then, the new ideal of fraternity is sustained in Rowe's *The Fair Penitent.* Altamont, Horatio, and Sciolto maintain the brotherhood through the exchange of wealth and women and their support of each other. Calista almost jeopardizes the fraternity through her

disregard for Sciolto's wishes and her refusal to accept her place as the passive wife to Altamont; however, her death signals the lack of toleration for such women in the new fraternal order. Lavinia meanwhile helps to sustain the fraternity throughout the play through her support of Horatio and his friendships. She is the stereotypical new women, subservient in all matters to father, brother and husband. She demonstrates her compliance with the emergent order, fulfilling her duty within the household to ensure success of the bourgeois ideology. Overall *The Fair Penitent* maintains the ideal of fraternity, and thus, represents the new political bourgeois ideology.

It is this kind of bourgeois ideology, then, that Susannah Centlivre displaces through her portrayal of female friendships. Her females are bold, strong, courageous, and witty, and instead of receiving punishment at the end of the plays, Centlivre's female characters are rewarded. Throughout the three plays, her female characters disobey father and brother figures. Centlivre's women support and sustain each other through a network of friendships that ultimately question not only the new bourgeois ideology of fraternity but the patriarchal institution of marriage as well.

CHAPTER 2

The Beau's Duel

Susannah Centlivre's *The Beau's Duel* or *A Soldier For the Ladies* (1702) opens with Colonel Manly and his friend Captain Bellmein discussing the merits of love. During their conversation they mistakenly conclude that they are in love with the same woman. However, Manly is actually in love with Clarinda, and Bellmein is in love with Emilia. Inevitably they both discover their mistakes later in the play. Meanwhile Clarinda is destined to marry a fop, Sir William Mode, according to her father's wishes; she absolutely disdains Mode, though, and she wants to marry Manly. The remainder of the play contains the obstacles and subsequent plots Clarinda and Emilia devise with their friend Mrs. Plotwell. Mrs. Plotwell is a single woman whose main goal in life is to rescue young women from fops, and her desire to help Clarinda creates camaraderie among the three women.

In this chapter, I will examine the different friendships throughout the play in order to show how they displace the bourgeois ideal of fraternity. Firstly, Clarinda and Emilia have a social as well as political friendship that is repeatedly questioned and tested. Secondly, the friendship among all three of the women allows not only a displacement of the bourgeois ideal of fraternity but also a displacement of the institution of marriage. Ultimately the loyalty of the three women to each other portrays a progressive idea of sorority. I also want to compare the friendship between Clarinda and Emilia to the friendship between Manly and Bellmein, a friendship that falls in line with Pateman's ideal of fraternity. I will show that Emilia and Clarinda's friendship contains aspects of typical bourgeois fraternity through an exemplification of the parallels between the male and female friendships.

Prior to examining the different friendships, however, I will analyze the characterization of Sir William Mode and Careful, Clarinda's father. Both are ridiculous fools who repeatedly show their incompetence. I think their characterization further illustrates the difference between the men and women, while showing that women deserve individual respect. Sir William Mode, an absurd character, is referred to as "a mere Compound of Powder, Paint, and Affectation, so perfum'd, you may smell him a Mile" (71).[ii] From Centlivre's political stance this beau is a perfect target for teasing. Her beliefs were Whig; that is, she strongly supported the emerging

bourgeoisie and disliked the old aristocracy. Thus, she favored individuals such as the Colonel and the Captain as they represented the new middle class, and she despised Mode because he represented older aristocratic ideals. Not only do her Whig politics surface in her demeaning characterization of Mode but also, she shows that women need to gain a voice so as not to suffer marriage with such fools. For example, Mode says, "I believe I have something extraordinary in me that makes me so acceptable to all the Women I come in Company with" (69). His self-involvement and subsequent lack of concern for others is detrimental to women. Therefore, it is important to recognize, as Clarinda does, how little a beau benefits society.

Like Mode, Careful is also portrayed as a foolish old man who does not respect Clarinda. At the beginning of the play, he resolves to marry and settle his estate on any one but his daughter should she refuse to marry Mode. He says, "I'm resolved she shall marry Sir William tomorrow" but then adds, "Well since you are so fickle, Mistress, I'll fix you presently, or marry myself" (94). The negative characterization of Careful helps audiences to sympathetically view Clarinda's situation, thereby disrupting traditional identification with the brotherhood. According to tradition, as well as the new bourgeois political ideal, Careful should have been obeyed without questions, as Lavinia obeys Sciolto. By having such inadequate male figures, Centlivre shows that men often lack decision making skills. Unlike Sciolto in *The Fair Penitent,* Careful cannot be trusted to make any decisions for his daughter. This portrays a drastic difference in the writing of Nicholas Rowe and Centlivre. Centlivre's reconstruction of the father / daughter relationship includes women as vital individuals who deserve agency.

Centlivre's feminist viewpoint is further emphasized in the characterization and friendship between Emilia and Clarinda. The audience is first introduced to Emilia and Clarinda in Act I while the two are having a conversation. Emilia, Clarinda's cousin, has just arrived in England, and Clarinda's father has provided lodging for her. When we meet them, Clarinda has been attempting to accustom Emilia to the ways of her country.

> CLARINDA: Dear Emilia, you ask so many Questions, pr'thee have some Pity, and spare me a little.
> EMILIA: Dear Cousin, do you pity me, and answer me a little.
> CLARINDA: I have answer'd you, these three Days you have been in Town, More Questions than all the Astrologers and Philomaths in London could resolve in a Month. (72)

Clarinda thus helps Emilia understand English traditions while at the same time building solidarity. Through her help, Emilia gains invaluable insight into the social structure of England. This type of friendship, according to Janet Todd's categories, would be considered a social friendship because the two women help each other *within* society's dictates. This is the first time that Clarinda and Emilia converse, and subsequently, they begin to form even stronger bonds of friendship.

The next instance of friendship comes only moments after their first conversation when Emilia detects that something is upsetting Clarinda. The sympathy Emilia offers Clarinda shows her friendship. Emilia asks, "And I have as many more to ask before I can be satisfied: I'd fain know the Cause of all this Alteration, why so much Uneasiness and so much Spleen? Never pleas'd but when you are displeas'd, nor like your Company; but when you are alone" (73). Emilia observes that Clarinda suffers for unknown reasons. She is in pain knowing that Clarinda is upset and she desperately wants to know Clarinda's problems so they can work together to come to some kind of solution. As a result of Emilia's questions, then, Clarinda begins to share her thoughts, and this allows the two women to begin plotting against Mode and Careful. Hence, the friendship becomes solidified through equal contempt for the rules of patriarchy.

Not only does women's capacity for friendship surface in this scene but also their ability to banter intellectually. The following dialogue illustrates the rhetorical intelligence of the two women through their logical banter.

> CLARINDA: Oh, How inquisitive are Girls!
>
> EMILIA: Oh, How reserv'd are Lovers!
>
> CLARINDA: Pr'ythee, Cousin, learn to be more serious.
>
> EMILIA: Pr'ythee, Cousin learn to be more free. (73)

Both women are humorous and witty throughout this exchange. Centlivre thus shows that women are able to carry on a conversation with sense and logic. The dialogue of Clarinda and Emilia emphasizes their ability to communicate as friends on a number of different levels.

As their conversation continues, Clarinda and Emila strengthen their friendship through trust and sympathy. Clarinda says, "Since 'tis in vain to hide it from you, Emilia, I'll try you with that Confidence I hitherto thought you too young for" (73). Clarinda then starts to discuss her problems with Emilia about Mode, and she explains how she really is in love with Manly, whom her father hates. In response to Clarinda's problems, Emilia says, "Lovers, Clarinda, like

People in Motion, fancy every thing they see, moves as they do" (74). Emilia speaks plainly about lovers here and what it is like to be in love. She patiently explains to Clarinda all of the ins and outs of love, in what is another moment of social friendship. Not only does Emilia offer knowledge about lovers, but she offers her friendship, whereby both women teach each other.

The representation of women as dependable, emotionally stable, and ready to do anything for each other subsequently continues in Centlivre's characterization of Mrs. Plotwell. The audience learns, moments prior to meeting Mrs. Plotwell at the beginning of Act II, that her lifelong goal is to rid the world of fops, and that she is always willing to help women in their troubles.

> I grow weary of persecuting these Blockheads; the very Idea of a Gallant is nauseous to me: Oh! That all Women would but treat the Fools as they deserve, would they take my Advice, no Fop, whose Impertinence tended to the Prejudice of Virtue, should 'scape unexpos'd. (85)

Importantly, Mrs. Plotwell is allowed to poke fun at these "beaus" without any punishment. Through her monologue, it is evident that she refuses to succumb to the trickery of any beau. She vows to rid society of any individual who is a fool. Mrs. Plotwell vows never to marry; her goal instead is to "persecute fops." She actively warns women against these ridiculous men; consequently, she maintains women's ability to become decision makers who actively refuse to marry foolish beaus. Her extensive help offered to Clarinda and Emilia further illustrates her adamant hatred of beaus and her desire to improve the condition of women. She is called to Clarinda's and immediately offers her assistance to the two women in need.

Upon Mrs. Plotwell's arrival, she begins to form a plan to accost Mode. Through her supervision, the girls adequately prepare for a ruse to gain freedom from Mode. As they are getting ready to pick a fight with Mode in order to dissuade him from marrying Clarinda, a moment of hesitation arises.

> CLARINDA: Here, here on with you Manhood.
>
> EMILIA: I fear Clarinda, this Masquerade will not be reputable for Women of nice Honour. (95)

Interestingly, at this point Mrs. Plotwell says, "Oh, don't fear that, since you only wear it to do yourselves Justice: for Justice can never be dishonourable" (95). Mrs. Plotwell offers her strong

advice and support through her persuasive rhetoric. She continues to persecute fops through her engagement with Clarinda and Emilia and their ruse.

Eventually Mrs. Plotwell helps Clarinda marry Manly, a move which falls into the social friendship category, but Mrs. Plotwell's kind of support also fits into the category of political friendship. She repeatedly questions the patriarchal authority of Mode and Careful in relation to Clarinda and Emila. Through her suggestion of disguise to accost Mode and subsequent help getting ready for the fight, she also disrupts the patriarchal institution of marriage, in particular, contesting the idea that fathers should choose the husband. Mrs. Plotwell instills the notion into Emilia and Clarinda that both of the girls should be able to choose whom they want on their own. Ultimately, she helps Emilia and Clarinda realize that they do not need to settle for Mode. She also remains single at the end of the play, which further disrupts the idea of the bourgeois women and questions the validity of the institution of marriage. She does not remain secluded in the household, she never marries, and she is repeatedly portrayed as an active woman who desires that all women become active.

The friendship between Clarinda and Emilia is tested prior to leaving for the fight. Emilia is under the impression that the man who has been making eyes with her is in fact the same person that Clarinda pines for; however, she is mistaken because it is Bellmein who is in love with Emilia, and Manly who is in love with Clarinda. In a moment of self reflection and inner controversy Emilia says, "I must tell her of his Falsehood," and then Emilia notifies Clarinda saying, "you ben't deceiv'd in him" (97). Clarinda is utterly bewildered and unable to believe that Manly is false. Emilia continues, "He makes Love to me; nay, don't start; had I not been too much your Friend, Clarinda, I had not let you into the Secret; for upon my Word, I don't think him disagreeable" (97). I suggest that the above interchange continues to show that female friendship is more important than heterosexual unions.

Instead of becoming incredibly jealous and refusing to ever speak to each other again, the women remain fairly calm. Clarinda takes in her new found knowledge and then acts in a rational way.   Unlike the stereotypical characterization of women as emotionally unstable, both women logically conclude they need to resolve the situation together through a meeting. Clarinda calmly asks some questions and realizes that in fact the situation Emilia mentioned might be true. Coincidently, she receives a letter from Manly that implies he is suspicious of her behavior. Clarinda exclaims to Emilia, "Oh! Monstrous, perfidious, Mankind! Oh, I perceive

your Drift, he charges me with this Fool, on Purpose to find Pretence for his own Falsehood. It is a poor Excuse, but what won't Men fall into, when they quit their Honour; Oh that I had but an Opportunity of upbraiding him to his Face" (98). Emilia responds, "That you shall; he knows not yet of the Discovery, I'll write to him to come here, I have no Reason to suspect his disobeying the Summons, no more now, than formerly" (98). The sorority established between Emilia and Clarinda does not falter with the supposed falsehood of a man, in fact Emilia adamantly vows to help Clarinda.

The parallel friendships, I suggest, further illuminates Centlivre's view that the fraternity possible among men is possible among women as well. The friendships that cross male/female binaries show that women are just as capable as men. The friendships between Clarinda and Emilia, and Manly and Bellmein appear almost exactly the same, which seems to suggest that in fact women can be friends on the same level as men. Both demonstrate an understanding of friendship even though their respective lovers might be in love with their best friends. Manly fears that Clarinda is in love with Bellmein instead of himself, just as Clarinda fears that Manly is in love with Emilia. Both friendships show reason and rationality in the face of adversity; the friendship between each is more important than their prospective lovers. The girls, as well as the men remain good friends while the business of deceitfulness is sorted out. Loyalty then becomes a trait that occurs across sexes, and Centlivre is able to show that sorority is just as essential as fraternity.

In contrast to Manly, Bellmein, Clarinda, and Emilia, Careful continues to be a negative and hostile figure through his lack of awareness of Clarinda's individuality. Right before Emilia and Clarinda embark on their journey to accost Mode, Clarinda says,

> How resolutely my cruel Father persecutes me with this Fop; therefore, since poor Clarinda is in all this Danger, I, my own Knight-Errant, and thou my trusty 'Squire, will march En cavalier, and deliver the distres'd Damsel, by beating the Giant into a Pigmy; then be our own Heralds, and proclaim our Victory to my Father, and hollow the Coward so loud in his Ears, that we will shame him out of all Thoughts of this Fool. (95)

The speech made by Clarinda demonstrates her understanding of fops, as well as her determination not to marry Mode for anything in the world. She proclaims to all that she is her "own Knight-Errant," thus, insinuating she needs help from no one else, and that she is strong

enough to physically harm Mode. Also within this speech Clarinda displays characteristics of cleverness. She is strong, witty, and intelligent and we soon learn she has devised an entire plan to rid herself of Mode. Earlier in the play she sent a letter to Mode calling for a duel, and she signed the letter "Mr. Roughly." Contrary to the bourgeois assumption that women can accomplish nothing without the better judgment of a man, Clarinda's plan was logically thought out and executed. Even though Mode has convinced his ridiculous friend Ogle to help him fight, Clarinda still maintains her original plan of forcing Mode to look elsewhere for a bride.

Prior to the arrival of Clarinda and Emilia, Mode and Ogle talk about fighting, and reveal that they truly lack any courage or bravery. Clarinda and Emilia then enter with swords drawn and Clarinda says, "Say you so Sir! Now hear my Sentiments, he that would not draw a sword upon any just Account, should be kick'd thus, and thus Sir" (99). She then proceeds to kick and thrash Mode. While doing so, Emilia and Clarinda both continue to harass the men verbally. Emilia, showing that she will do anything for her friend, says, "You don't hear well, Sir, I'll lengthen your Ears a little" (99). Importantly, Emilia's personal stake in the interaction is solely for the benefit of her cousin. She abuses Ogle and Mode extensively attempting to force them to realize Clarinda would despise a marriage to Mode. In the physical actions Emilia takes, her loyalty to Clarinda through self-sacrifice is evident.

After both women thoroughly abuse the men, Clarinda, in disguise, says to Mode, "I'm a Servant to Clarinda, and consequently a Rival of yours," and "I came hither to kick you, and expose you when I had done; the first, you are sensible I have perform'd and from that Instance of my Honesty, you may take my Word for the rest" (99). Mode realizes to an extent that Clarinda scorns marriage with him. Unfortunately, Manly and Bellmein approach at this juncture, and both Clarinda and Emilia exit quickly. Throughout this humorous scene, a number of important aspects of Centlivre's feminism are revealed. Firstly, even while pondering the falsehood of her lover, Clarinda can still focus on berating Mode. I think this continues to refute the bourgeois idea that women are unstable. Secondly, women can remain friends, while facing obstacles among themselves. Thirdly, Emilia continues to place her intellect and brashness at the disposal of Clarinda. As a friend, Emilia decides to accompany Clarinda on her journey, and her sacrifice continues to show that women are capable of sorority. Clarinda and Emilia are courageous active women who refuse to allow incompetent fools to dictate their lives; they are literally out in the streets defining their futures through the help of each other. Most importantly,

though, the physical aspect of this scene emphasizes Centlivre's radical notions about women. Nowhere else in Centlivre's plays do two women set out to physically abuse a man. Perhaps because this was her first full length comedy, she here courageously represented physically strong women capable of outdoing men. This radical notion of women's abilities manifested itself in other ways throughout the later plays, but never again did the audience see such a bold feminist portrayal of physical equality between men and women.

Shortly after leaving the fight with Mode, Emilia and Clarinda return home to discover Careful waiting for them. Due to Clarinda's intelligence and ability to think quickly, she devises a story to explain away the disguises. Clarinda says,

> Why you must know, Sir, I was inform'd of a Duel between Sir William Mode, and a Brother Beau of his; the Concern I knew you had for Sir William's Safety engag'd my Care for the Prevention; I was unwilling to expose him, by sending any Body else; so that my Cousin and I, by the help of this disguise, parted them. (102)

Clarinda's story becomes more believable when Emilia says, "And I think it a good Project too, Uncle" (3.1). Emilia and Clarinda continue to help each other out. Not only do they support each other to triumph over fops but also to triumph over controlling father figures as well. Their ability to be supportive is further evidence that sorority causes an upset in traditional patriarchal constraints. Careful, by contrast, cannot see past his own greed in marrying off Clarinda. While Clarinda and Emilia try their hardest to convince Careful of Clarinda's love for another, Careful still insists, "I have sent for Sir William, in order to have the Settlement completed To-night, and To-morrow your Honour shall rise with the sun; that is to say, you shall be my Lady Mode" (103). The services of Mrs. Plotwell are thus again necessary to convince him otherwise.

Through her cunning and expertise, Mrs. Plotwell creates a ruse to completely confuse Careful. She taps into his desire for wealth and uses that knowledge to get Clarinda out of his clutches. The ruse begins when Toper, a friend of Mrs. Plotwell's, introduces her as his cousin, Anne. Mrs. Plotwell then takes on the personality of a devout religious woman who cares little for worldly concerns. For example Mrs. Plotwell says, "I say that Mankind were not made for Foppery and Pride, but to do good in their Generation…our devoutest women wore coarse Linen, or rather none at all" (105). She also pretends to be solely concerned with her scripture, saying, "I love Retirement, must have Time for my Devotions in my own Way; I'm not us'd to the

Ceremony of Visits, and hate Tea-Table Vanity, and Card-Play, as they call it" (105). The whole point of this ruse it to get Careful to marry her so that eventually she can make him repent his decision and wish for his daughter back, and it works. Careful says, "I protest I don't care if you have not a Groat, your Virtue's a wealthy Dowry to me; say you'll but have me and 'tis enough" (105). Mrs. Plotwell's ingenious idea works so wonderfully that he quickly decides to marry her and settle his whole estate.

Mrs. Plotwell's desire to trick Careful then is again evidence of her friendship for Clarinda, and it is significant that she is never punished for her trickery. She does exactly what she wants, when she wants to, and her behavior is portrayed as admirable in the face of the problematic men in the play. In her efforts she also has the support of two of the male characters, Toper and Bellmein, who help her carry out her many plots. This shows that Mrs. Plotwell is able to garner help from many different places and that she is able to interact with men as well as women.

Mrs. Plotwell consistently rescues Clarinda and Emilia from sticky situations toward the end of the play; thus, it is her friendship that is responsible for the play's happy ending. In one particular scene, Mrs. Plotwell distracts Careful so that Emilia and Clarinda can uncover the truth about their respective lovers. The plan to determine who is false fails at first, and Manly yells to Clarinda, "Thy Crimes are obvious to my Sight, and I take thee at thy Word, and from this Moment I'll never see you more," and he storms off (108). However, Emilia discovers Bellmein, her true love, eavesdropping behind the curtain, and the mistake is cleared when Emilia and Bellmein show their love for each other. As the mistake is cleared between Emilia, Bellmein, and Clarinda, they get ready to take off to find and explain the situation to Manly. Careful then wanders into the room and insists that Clarinda marry Mode immediately, which prompts Mrs. Plotwell to step in. She falsely suggests to Careful that through a bit more patience and time Clarinda will come around and decide to marry Mode. Luckily, her speech touches Careful's desire for wealth, and Clarinda is cleared for an hour to find Manly. Furthermore, Mrs. Plotwell promises that when Clarinda returns Careful's fortune and consent will be hers (111).

Shortly after Clarinda's departure, Mrs. Plotwell performs her final deceptive act; her performance successfully forces Careful to reevaluate his objective and to think carefully about Clarinda's forced marriage. To illustrate a bit of Mrs. Plotwell's humorous performance, I have quoted two lines which are a response to Careful's desire to sleep with Mrs. Plotwell: "Did

every Man of your Hairs ask such Questions?" and she adds "For to bed with you were a direct Emblem of my going to my grave" (120). Upon learning the "true" character of his new wife Careful moans, "Oh that I had my Daughter again! Two Days more of this, and I shall grow mad, or to redeem myself, dash out my Brains" (121). Mrs. Plotwell's intrigue was successful; Careful now wants his daughter back and Mrs. Plotwell gone.

Mrs. Plotwell's friendship with Clarinda and Emilia in Act 5 forces Careful to reconsider his objections to Clarinda's marriage, and it also teaches him an important lesson. Order is restored, but it is an order that is agreeable to all members involved. Careful is asked "wou'd you forgive your Daughter" if the marriage could be nulled, and he responds "With all my Soul" (126). He recognizes he was wrong attempting to marry to keep his fortune. He desperately wants his daughter back and agrees to settle most of the estate on Clarinda. The entire situation is cleared and everyone returns to their true character when Mrs. Plotwell says, "Why, truly, Sir, being loth to see this young Lady thrown away upon a Fool… I undertook to reduce you to your Reason" (127). Mrs. Plotwell shows Careful how his daughter should be treated. Through her many different guises, Mrs. Plotwell reforms Careful's inability to see past his wealth and henceforth he vows to be more considerate of Clarinda's decisions. Emilia consents to Bellmein's proposition, and the play concludes with two happy marriages. Before the final scene of dancing, Clarinda says to Mrs. Plotwell, "Madam, you deserve our best Thanks for this exemplary Piece of Justice; and, be assured you have laid an eternal Obligation on me" (128). Mrs. Plotwell, one of the driving forces of the different ruses, promotes a society where justice and equality for women is equivalent to that of men.

At the end of the play Mrs. Plotwell warns, "Therefore beware, you happy Maids, how you listen to the deluding Tongues of Men, 'tis only they have Power to betray you" (129). Throughout the play Clarinda and Emilia repeatedly demonstrate their abilities to act as only men can, that is with reason and intellect. They also prove that, while hardships may come across their paths, they will remain loyal to each other. Centlivre thus shows that women are important members of society who can make judgments for the greater good. In fact, as the ending lines presume women are actually more able and loyal than men. Centlivre creates three intelligent and active women who aggressively pursue their goals. From Emilia to Clarinda to Mrs. Plotwell, this play demonstrates Centlivre's connection to Restoration Drama. The disguises, physical fighting, and the overt critique of male control align this play with the

Restoration period. However, Centlivre's play, *The Wonder,* discussed in the next Chapter, deviates from the Restoration format. While the women are adventurous at times, they never use disguise or physical aggressiveness to gain agency; instead, they act in a somewhat subdued fashion and are much less flamboyant than Clarinda, Emilia, and Mrs. Plotwell.

CHAPTER 3

The Wonder! A Woman Keeps a Secret

The Wonder (1714) opens with Isabella arguing with her father, Don Lopez, regarding her prospective husband, Don Guzman. Isabella observes,

> The custom of our country enslaves us from our very cradles, first to our parents, next to our husbands, and when Heaven is so kind to rid us of both these, our brothers still usurp authority and expect blind obedience. (8)[iii]

Not only is Isabella enslaved to her father but Violante, the other main female character is enslaved to her father, Don Pedro as well. Don Lopez wants Isabella to marry the old rich fool Don Guzman; Don Pedro wants Violante to enter a convent. However, neither woman is satisfied with their fathers' plans. Violante is in love with Don Felix and designs to marry him; Isabella wants to get married but not to Don Guzman. Violante and Isabella realize their respective confining situations, and for the remainder of the play they attempt and eventually succeed in defining their own outcomes.

In this chapter, I will examine the friendship between Violante and Isabella as well as the friendship between Violante and her maid, Flora. Unlike Calista and Lavinia, the women in these relationships support and sustain each other through many obstacles. As well as being capable of friendship, the fact that these women characters are intellectual and witty helps to displace the bourgeois ideology of the weak and emotional woman. As in the previous chapter, I will look at the two father figures in order to show them in contrast to the women. As an analysis of Don Pedro and Don Lopez will reveal, they are overbearing and ignorant; importantly, they are incapable of considering women as individuals who can make decisions for themselves. This further illustrates that Centlivre wanted the sympathy of the audience to be with the women.

Don Lopez is the more oppressive of the two fathers. He says, "I resolve she shall marry Don Guzman the moment he arrives. Though I could not govern my son, I will my daughter, I assure you" (4). When Isabella attempts to persuade Don Lopez of her feelings imploring, "Do not mistake, Sir. The fatal stroke which separates soul and body is not more terrible to the

thoughts of sinners, than the name of Guzman to my ears," Don Lopez is not willing to consider her plea (10). As she considers killing herself, Don Lopez offers her his sword warning, "The point is pretty sharp. 'Twill do your business, I warrant you" (11). His control is the only thing important to him, and he will go to great lengths to ensure superiority. His desire to exercise complete control over Isabella is also dramatized when he rudely pushes her into a room and bolts the door.

> I shall make bold to secure thee, my dear. I'll see if locks and bars
> Can keep thee till Guzman come. Go, get into your chamber.
> There I'll boasted resolution try,
> And see who'll get the better, you or I. (11)

Don Lopez's rhetoric of angry control, the play reveals, stems directly from his desire to increase wealth. To Don Lopez, money stands for everything, a love of money he explains when he says, "Money, and that will purchase everything" (4). He is willing to sell his daughter to the highest bidder so that he may grow in riches.

Don Pedro, the audience learns in Act IV, is just as concerned with increasing his wealth. Don Pedro intends to cheat Violante out of money that rightfully belongs to her from her grandfather. He begins this deception when he tempts Violante to enter a convent. "My lady abbess writes word she longs to see thee, and has provided everything in order for thy reception. Thou wilt lead a happy life, my girl," (55) he persuades. As Don Pedro wanders off to the side of the stage, he remarks,

> Did she know that she might command her fortune when she came at age or upon the day of marriage… But I have always told her that her grandfather left it with the proviso: that she turned nun. Now a small part of this twenty thousand pounds provides for her in the nunnery, and the rest is my own. (56)

Both Don Pedro and Don Lopez, then, are dishonest, and they attempt to take advantage of the vulnerability of their daughters because of their excessive greediness. Both women, however, recognize their fathers' financial greed and adamantly refuse to be their pawns.

The women's ability to take control away from their fathers is founded on their friendship. The friendship begins when Violante welcomes Isabella into her house. After locked into the chamber by Don Lopez, Isabella escapes out the window and falls into the arms of

Colonel Briton, who takes her to the nearest house. Violante opens the door of this house, sees Isabella, and promises the Colonel she will take care of Isabella. Subsequently, Violante and Isabella develop a friendship that lasts throughout the play. Isabella has nowhere else to go. She cannot return home because her father will force her back into captivity, and then she will be obliged to marry Don Guzman. Luckily for Isabella, Violante recognizes the situation and immediately asks, "Can I be serviceable to you?" (20). Isabella responds, "Yes, if you conceal me two or three days," and without hesitation Violante replies, "You command my house and secrecy" (20). She immediately assumes the role of protector at the risk of incurring the anger not only of Don Lopez but of Don Felix, Isabella's brother and coincidentally Violante's prospective lover.

This first instance of friendship portrays two essential components of Violante and Isabella's relationship. Firstly, Violante risks Don Felix's love by hiding his sister. If Don Felix were to find out that Violante was harboring Isabella, he would not approve; indeed, most likely, he would be angered by her actions and decide not to marry her. However, Violante states her willingness to take on this risk when, in a moment of undying faith for Isabella, she says, "Depend upon my friendship. Nothing shall draw the secret from these lips, not even Felix, though at the hazard of his love" (22). She recognizes her protection of Isabella might thwart her eventual marriage to Don Felix. Secondly, not only is her self-sacrifice evident but also her disregard for the patriarchal institution of marriage. By allowing Isabella to stay with her, she creates problems for the success of Don Lopez's plans. Isabella cannot marry Don Guzman if Violante continues to keep her hidden, and thus Violante takes away Don Lopez's and Don Felix's domination of Isabella. The displacement of the patriarchal institution then is twofold because not only does Violante create problems for the marriage to Guzman but she also willing compromises her own marriage. The friendship between Isabella and Violante begins to shape itself into a political friendship, as Janet Todd delineated, that is, it attempts a displacement/usurpation of patriarchal power.

Only moments later Violante also demonstrates her self-sacrifice when Felix enters the house wanting a secret meeting with her. Violante sends Isabella into a chamber where she can hide. During the meeting, however, the Colonel shows up at the window to check on Isabella's condition subsequent to her fall. Felix jumps to conclusions and believes the man tapping at the window is another lover of Violante's, and he falls into a jealous rage. Don Felix emphatically

announces that Violante must clear his suspicions; she must allow him to overhear the conversation between Violante and the Colonel. However, if Don Felix heard the conversation, Isabella would be discovered. In the midst of the confrontation between Don Felix and Violante, the Colonel begins to rail that "his soul" (Isabella) is contained in the house, and he must see that she is safe (24). The action continues to escalate as Don Felix is more and more convinced Violante has another lover. Don Felix's jealousy climaxes, and he yells, "Then it shall never be. Thou most ungrateful of thy sex, farewell," and then he storms off (26). After he has left Violante exclaims, "Oh exquisite trial of my friendship! Yet, not even this shall draw the secret from me" (26). Don Felix's irrational jealousy will not force her to break the pact of "friendship" with Isabella.

Carol Pateman's analysis of the characteristic bourgeois women ironically applies to that of Don Felix and his emotional state during his accusations. His mental state portrays disorder; he seems quite on the edge and prone to over-reacting. Not only does this behavior highlight a certain amount of "femininity," but it also highlights the contrasting characteristics of Violante and Felix. Violante is rational and patient as she attempts to dissuade Don Felix. Violante says,"Oh, think how far honour can oblige your sex; then allow a woman may be bound by the same rule to keep a secret" (25). She makes a logical argument where she compares her duty to a man's. Unlike *The Beau's Duel* where the ideal of equality lies within an implicit comparison between the male and female friendships, here Centlivre explicitly constructs equality between the sexes. Centlivre also shows, through Violante, that women are capable of intellect and logic. Violante can determine when silence is pertinent to Isabella's safety and she is aware of the constructs of honor that bind men; she wants Don Felix to allow that she may also have a similar code of honor. I think here is a call for recognition that women can, in fact, be friends on the same level as men. Even more clearly than in *The Beau's Duel,* the political friendship of Violante and Isabella begins to displace the new bourgeois ideology that we saw in Rowe's play.

A dialogue between the two women in Act IV further exemplifies Violante's understanding of female friendship, and this friendship, as she describes it, appears remarkably similar to Pateman's ideal of fraternity. Violante falsely discovers that Felix might have interest in another woman; she is upset and decides to share her emotions with Isabella. Isabella patiently listens to Violante and attempts to soothe her. Isabella becomes noticeably agitated while listening to Violante and says, "Then I am most unhappy. My brother was the only pledge

of faith betwixt us. If he has forfeited your favour, I have no title to your friendship" (47). Violante responds, "You wrong my friendship, Isabella. Your own merit entitles you to everything within my power" (47). Violante's anger with Don Felix, this statement shows, does not spill over into her friendship with Isabella; instead, Isabella has her own virtues, her own "merit." This begins to construct women as individuals whose worth is determined through their own deeds.

Unlike Centlivre's previous plays, *The Wonder* candidly advocates, within the dialogue of the play, equality based on merit for women. Isabella's actions, words, and sympathy gain Violante's friendship. While this scenario is similar to when Emilia and Clarinda first acknowledge the other's possible dishonesty, *The Beau's Duel* assumed audience awareness of loyal female friendship. However, *The Wonder* assumes nothing; instead, Violante's emphatic observation on the merits of female friendship is a blatant critique of audience stereotypes regarding female friendship. By showing that women can interact on a logical level as men do, Centlivre shows her feminist political ideas, and she expresses the importance of recognizing women as active intellectual individuals.

Not only does Violante act intelligently throughout but Isabella does so as well in her first meeting with Colonel Briton after her fall. She initiates a meeting between the two of them through one of Violante's maids. Once she has confirmation that the Colonel will meet with her, she leaves Violante's house for the Terriero de Passa. The conversation is fascinating because it reveals Isabella's control of language as well as her intellect and wit. At the beginning the Colonel offers her some tea and she responds, "Is that the best you can give a lady at your lodging, Colonel?" (41). Isabella seems to be searching for what else the Colonel might be willing to offer. I think she is pushing the Colonel to find out about his station in life and to learn more about his character prior to her continued pursuance. When the Colonel attempts to embrace her while making a proposition to return to his house, Isabella responds, "If I take a lease it must be for life, Colonel" (41). She intimates in other words that in order for them to have sex they must be married. Isabella thus keeps control of the conversation and attempts to turn it toward her ultimate goal of marriage. She displays a sense of her own worth through language, hoping that the Colonel will recognize her status. The Colonel seems to be rather slow in comprehending Isabella's wishes, but she continues to hold her ground and sticks to her plan. She will not be tricked by his own false language of love until he is proven respectable. When

he begs her to take off her veil entreating, “I love to see my meat before I give thanks, Madam. Therefore uncover thy face, child, and I’ll tell thee more of my mind. If I like you….” She responds, “I dare not risk my reputation upon your ifs, Colonel, and so adieu” (42). Her reputation, as well as Violante’s, rests on her continued veiled image. By forcing the Colonel to believe she will leave and never be seen again, he begins to recognize his mistake and vows, “Well, for once I’ll trust to a blind bargain, Madam” (42).

The Colonel has no other options than those that Isabella constructs. She is in complete control. He must act according to her wishes or she will seek love elsewhere, and so he agrees to meet with her later. In this exchange, Isabella has repeatedly demonstrated her ability to reason with the Colonel. The dialogue begins with the Colonel initiating some kind of sexual favors, and at the end Isabella receives a promise that he will wait for her. Isabella thus dominates Colonel Briton throughout their conversation, convincing him to consider the prospect of marriage. She maintains an intellectual and logical poise that allows her to attain her desired goal.

A meeting between Violante and the Colonel occurs shortly thereafter in which Violante compromises much including her honor, her sense of duty, and her set of rules regarding social interaction for Isabella’s sake thus further illustrating the sacrifices made for female friendship. Isabella begs Violante to help her convince the Colonel of her desire for marriage. At first Violante refuses to comply with Isabella, because she does not want to place herself at risk alone with an unknown man, but then the Colonel abruptly shows up at her house. Violante asks, “Well, what am I to do?” (48). Isabella escorts Violante off stage where they have a short meeting while the Colonel is shown into the house. Violante emerges veiled to speak with him. The Colonel mistakes Violante for Isabella, and he tries to kiss her, and then bribe her with money to take him to bed. Without taking offense and berating the Colonel for his ungrateful and rude attitude, Violante continues the conversation with the commitment to Isabella in mind. Violante manages to speak with the Colonel in a manner he can relate to, through logical, intellectual statements about Isabella’s desire to marry, while at the same time persuading him that she, Violante, is not his disguised lover. In the end he replies, “I accept that offer with the highest transports,” and “On that condition I’ll not breathe” (50-51). Violante is thus an honorable friend who continues to keep Isabella’s secret while compromising herself.

Isabella recognizes the value of her friendship with Violante, and she is also aware of the boundaries transgressed in the name of friendship. Through her realization, the play suggests, that friendship between women is an essential component not only to women's happiness, but men's as well. Isabella says, "I know not how to express my thanks, woman, for what you have suffered for my sake, my grateful acknowledgements shall ever wait you, and to the world proclaim the faith, truth and honor of a woman" (58-59). This example continues to illustrate the possibility and probability that women can, in fact, be loyal friends. Instead of berating Isabella for not following her father's wishes as the "proper" woman might do, Violante believes in Isabella's decision. She supports Isabella repeatedly, and it is evident that her only reward is Isabella's happiness. At this point Todd's "social friendship," a friendship that works within patriarchal constraints, comes into focus. Violante helps Isabella to work within the institution of marriage when she displays friendship through her conversation with the Colonel. Violante continues to follow in some respect the patriarchal institution of marriage, but she never suggests Isabella return home to Don Lopez and marry Don Guzman, as Lavinia would have done. Instead Violante recognizes Isabella's intents and does everything in her power to help her. Ultimately, the patriarchal institution of marriage succeeds, but it is transformed to cater more to the desires of Isabella and Violante.

Shortly after Violante's demonstration of social friendship, in another instance of Don Felix's unchecked jealousy, Violante demonstrates political friendship. His jealousy erupts again because of overheard gossip, and he accuses Violante of a relationship with some "Scot Colonel" (70). Violante patiently waits through his tirade on infidelity; however, she does not give away Isabella's secret. Felix says,

> Madam… since you have made such ill returns to the respect I have paid you, all you do shall be indifferent to me for the future, and you shall find me abandon your empire with so little difficulty, that I'll convince the world your chains are not so hard to break as your vanity. (68)

Violante refrains from showing her emotions as Don Felix continues to spew forth his admonishments. Instead she rationally informs Don Felix that if only he will trust her tonight all will be cleared, including her reputation. "Pray, ask me no more questions; this night shall clear my reputation, and leave you without excuse for your base suspicions" (70). Further pressured with threats and warnings, Violante continues to uphold the bonds of friendship. Under

impending permanent separation from Don Felix, she refuses to compromise. Her friendship, then, becomes political because she allows the heterosexual union to fall second to her friendship with Isabella. Her priorities lie with Isabella's safety, and not with her marriage to Don Felix, a rearrangement of values that displaces the traditional institution of marriage.

That Violante possesses the honor and crucial logic that Pateman found in the bourgeois ideal of fraternity is also apparent as the scene progresses. As Don Felix begins his exit, Don Pedro is heard in the next room, so Don Felix tries to hide in the closet where Isabella is stashed. She locks the door from the inside immediately, escalating Don Felix's jealousy. He says, "I will know who is in this closet, let the consequences be what it [sic] will. Nay, nay, nay, you strive in vain" (71). Violante must resolve the situation so as not to alarm her father, dissuade Don Felix's jealousy, and keep everyone from discovering Isabella. Her quick thinking becomes evident when she devises a story on the spot. She says a desperate young woman ran into the house because the drunken Don Felix chased her. To prove the truth of the situation she tells Isabella to "Come forth Madam, none shall dare to touch your *veil.* I'll convey you out with safety, or lose my life. *I hope she understands me*" (73 my emphasis). By placing emphasis on the veil, Violante conveys to Isabella how they both will get out of the situation without anyone being the wiser. Isabella understands Violante's suggestions, and she walks out completely covered, and both escape what could have been a ruinous situation.

Here again, Violante demonstrates her friendship for Isabella as well as her ability to think logically. She is not overly emotional and disorderly, nor is Isabella. They both perceive the complicated situation and act accordingly so as not alarm anyone. The friendship displayed by Violante continues to protect Isabella and they are shown to help each other. I would suggest that in this particular instance both Todd's political and social categories of friendship are evident. I would suggest social friendship because Violante continues to pacify Don Felix and Don Pedro. She wants to avoid any overt confrontation and, therefore, she continues to uphold the patriarchal institution of marriage. On the other hand, she also continues to show that her priorities remain with Isabella. While Violante truly wants to marry Don Felix, she still does not give away the secret in order to end his jealousy. Violante always remembers her bond of friendship before anything. Friendship, then, between Violante and Isabella continues on the same level as Pateman's fraternity.

Only moments after Violante diffuses the potential chaos of the above situation, another close call occurs and here too a women's friendship saves the day. In this incident, Flora, Violante's maid comes to the rescue. More than just a vehicle for plot movement, as Virginia Woolf had suggested about the confidante, Flora actively supports and sustains Violante. While Flora's friendship is quite different from Isabella and Violante's, she nonetheless demonstrates intellect, rationale, and self-sacrifice. The incident begins with Don Pedro's unexpected arrival while Violante is visiting with Don Felix. When Don Pedro enters Flora and Violante are momentarily lost for a convincing plan to get Don Felix out, without angering Don Pedro. Flora in this particular scene displays quick rational thinking in her ability to act under pressure for the benefit of her mistress. She says, "O, invention! Invention! I have it Madam. Here, here, here Sir, off with your sword, and I'll fetch you a disguise" (53). Flora throws a riding hood over Don Felix and claims him as her mother. Throughout the following scene, Flora makes up an entire farce about how her mother cannot speak, how she is blind, "afflicted with the colic, and about two months ago she had it grievously in her stomach" (54). She designs the entire charade simply to persuade Don Pedro that nothing is awry. The logical thinking of Flora in this scene helps Violante to keep her promises to Isabella. Flora's friendship is political, because she helps to displace paternal control while risking her position as maid. Her plot allows Violante to continue working against her father's desire for her to enter the convent.

A few moments later, the Colonel and Felix almost run into each other, which would in turn expose Isabella. Fortunately, Flora discovers what is about to happen and she thwarts the meeting. Flora helps the Colonel to escape out a side door before he can be discovered by Felix. Flora, then, also keeps Isabella's secret protected as well. If the Colonel and Don Felix were to meet, Isabella and Violante would be forced to live out the desired wishes of their respective fathers. Flora, then, continues the protection first designed by her mistress, which in turn helps sustain political friendship.

Not only does female friendship remain a constant but the greed of Don Pedro and Don Lopez does as well. Their pervasive greed, I argue, forces the audience to recognize the detrimental aspect of complete parental control. One critic observed that Centlivre denounces "a society that endorses a practice where a woman's happiness and well-being are sacrificed for wealth" (Fowler 54). The telling last scene shows the fathers bickering incessantly. Lopez is in complete shock when he realizes that his daughter has been married without his permission. He

says, “Married! Zounds, to whom?” (77). Subsequently, Don Pedro learns his daughter, Violante, is married to Don Felix. An argument ensues between the two men regarding money and thus their greed reigns till the last moments of the play. Don Lopez insists that he will get money from Don Pedro for the marriage; Don Pedro refuses to admit to the money, and they conclude that they will consult the law in order to resolve the situation. The fathers are exposed not only as money grubbers but also as corrupt and incompetent parents. As the play concludes, this lasting image of the arguing fathers steadfastly maintains the validity of recognition for daughters’ rights.

Centlivre also implies that woman can and should decide whom they want to marry on their own accord. As the end of the play suggests, Violante and Isabella’s happiness stems directly from their friendship. Without Violante’s help, Isabella would have been married to Don Guzman, and conversely without Isabella’s help Violante would have been forced into the convent. The combination of social and political friendship drives the outcomes of the play. On the one hand, social friendship acts to perpetuate the institution of marriage but the institution itself has thoroughly undergone a reconstruction because of the political friendship of Violante and Isabella.   Friendship is fundamental to the women not only dissuading their fathers’ goals but also for their life-long happiness. The end concludes with the happy marriages of Don Felix and Violante, and Isabella and Colonel Briton. The servants enter, the band strikes up, and everyone dances. The women are rewarded with happiness and love at the end of the play, suggesting Centlivre’s progressive political stance on women.

Centlivre’s feminist political ideology is further emphasized, I will argue, in her attempts to construct the new ideal man, one who is conscious of the individuality found in women, through two of the male characters, Frederick and Don Felix (eventually). Early in the play, Frederick, a friend of Don Felix, has an argument with Don Lopez. The argument stems from what Frederick sees as Don Lopez’s failure to view Isabella as an individual. He spends much time speaking with Don Lopez on how he should respect the wishes of his daughter.   Frederick says, “Surely you will not sacrifice the lovely Isabella to age, avarice, and a fool” (3). Don Lopez refuses to acknowledge Frederick’s thoughts throughout the dialogue. But Frederick continues with the question, “But have you no consideration for your daughter’s welfare?” (3), and concludes, “Monstrous! These are the resolutions which destroy the comforts of matrimony” (4). Frederick realizes that by forcing Isabella into marriage, Lopez will be harming

the idea of marriage. Frederick is the progressive male in the play who recognizes that women are capable of determining their futures, and he feels they should be treated with respect. Not only does Frederick realize women's potential but Don Felix, in his reformation and speech at the end, does so as well; hence, Don Felix emerges at the end as the new ideal man as well. Don Felix recognizes his misplaced jealousy, and he says, "Now my Violante, I shall proclaim thy virtues to the world. No more let us thy sex's conduct blame, since thou'rt proof to their eternal flame, that man has no advantage but the name" (79). Don Felix reforms and he understands that women need to be taken seriously and accorded their deserved rights. He also suggests that the notion that men are superior to woman is incorrect. Therefore, Don Felix's recognition of the honor and virtue displayed by Violante, demonstrates Centlivre's political view of a society where men and women exist on the same plane, and no one is better or worse than anyone else. In this progressive paradigm, women are afforded the power to make their own decisions and the power to utilize true female friendship.

As Centlivre's career progressed, from *The Beau's Duel* to *The Wonder: A Woman Keeps a Secret,* she removed the aggressive fighting women (Clarinda and Emilia) and the use of devious disguises. However, the power of *The Wonder* remains in the rhetoric of the characters. Isabella and Violante appeal to audiences through the evidence of their fathers' greed, and their numerous speeches expounding the worth of not only individual women but female friendship as well. Similarly, the title of the play is indicative of an assumption regarding women, namely that they are unable to keep secrets; in this manner, the play successfully inverts that stereotype. Even though they are not fighting in the streets, the women wield the power of language to re-construct and re-signify the bourgeois woman. As we shall see in the next chapter, Centlivre uses the power of language as well as controversial actions, similar to those in *The Beau's Duel*, in an appropriate combination to enable the women to find happiness and to marry whom they want.

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CHAPTER 4

The Artifice

Centlivre's final play, *The Artifice* (1722), was considered a flop by audiences and critics alike; the play ran only three times to dismal response. Similarly, early twentieth century critics claimed that it was too confusing and lacked the intellect of earlier plays. Specifically, John Bowyer wrote, "Her last play, *The Artifice,* contains some of the worst elements of three dramatic schools – light manner, busy intrigues, and sentimental reformation – and is really a failure in all" (237). Similarly, Richard Fushell wrote, "In this play she has plundered her own words for notions of plot, characterization, and theme. It seems as though at the end of her career and near the end of her life she tried to pack a bit of everything she ever wrote into this final effort." (13). While the play does in fact contain some similar aspects to the others, it also extends Centlivre's concept of sorority above and beyond *The Beau's Duel* and *The Wonder.* The two prominent women characters here are Louisa and Olivia. Louisa has just arrived from Holland in order to force Ned Freeman to honor his promise of marriage and support their son. Olivia, on the other hand, wishes to marry Ned's brother, John Freeman; however, her father believes she should marry Ned because he is currently in possession of the estate. The remainder of the play details how Louisa and Olivia struggle to assert influence in order to marry the men of their choosing.

The Artifice, true to many of her earlier works including *The Beau's Duel* and *The Wonder* contains smart witty women, who, through female solidarity are able to triumph over institutions of patriarchy. While the tone of the play is comedic, the underlying construct depicts the serious dangers that women faced in the eighteenth century. Not only is the necessity of sorority maintained but this final play emphasizes, through Louisa's struggle with the child out of wedlock, Centlivre's belief in the political woman. Louisa and Olivia, through their friendship, demonstrate that woman can think morally and act for the greater good of society. In order to further illustrate Centlivre's progressive stance, I will refer to Suz-Anne Kinney's concept of "positive space" (8). Kinney theorizes that Centlivre attempts "to create a positive space outside [the play] […] a place where women characters can make their own decisions and

act on them, a place where character's actions do not have to be driven along a linear and unified path to a predetermined end such as marriage" (8). The positive spaces in *The Artifice* question the authority of patriarchal institutions, support meritous female friendship, and create woman as political subjects. Centlivre, thus, in her final play, not only continues to uphold the feminist standards found in her earlier works but she further strengthens and supports her progressive feminist ideology.

Similar to Violante and Isabella in *The Wonder,* Olivia and Louisa meet under traumatic circumstances. While searching for a place to stay, Louisa accidentally runs into Olivia, who offers her lodgings. Louisa immediately trusts Olivia, and she laments Ned Freeman's lack of recognition of their marriage vows and his promise. Olivia then says to Louisa, "Your story I confess, Madam, is moving; but I am more suprized at *Freeman's* Insensibility than at his Perjury. It is no wonder to find a man false" (303). [iv] Even though Olivia is technically engaged to Ned, because of her father's desire to increase his wealth, she still offers Louisa support, and she promises, "All I can, be sure I'll do to serve thee" (303). Olivia's awareness of Ned's non-existent morality begins to shape her into a political subject. Not only does Olivia understand Ned but she is also able to sympathize with Louisa; thus, she recognizes the social limitations of Louisa's situation. Louisa's predicament, as opposed to that of Violante and Isabella, contains dangerous elements. For example, should Olivia not help her, Louisa would be forced to provide for the child alone, and she would be shunned from a society that looks down on women with children out of wedlock. Olivia, thus, is emblematic of a morally conscious woman, determined to help her friend succeed. The strength of Olivia's moral sense continues as she pronounces, "Depend upon any Thing in my power to serve you, Madam; my Soul abhors this Treachary, and had he been as dear to me, as his poor injured brother is I would renounce him now, tho' life went with him" (303). Olivia's articulate thoughts further emphasize her adamant refusal to tolerate such morally unacceptable behavior. Besides her thoughts, Olivia also suggests a plan of action the audience learns about later. Olivia persistently displaces, as do many of Centlivre's female characters, the new bourgeois political ideology that conceived of women as emotional reckless individuals.

Further evidence of Olivia's hatred of morally thoughtless men occurs moments later during a heated dialogue with her father, Sir Philip Moneylove. Sir Philip enters the scene shortly after Olivia promises to help Louisa, and he questions the exchange he overheard in the

hallway. I will quote much of the exchange because it shows how powerful Olivia's rhetoric is in questioning the issue of patriarchal control that is harmful to women. Sir Philip asks, "Pray, who let you in Mistress [Louisa]," and Olivia plainly responds, "Justice" (303). Thus begins Olivia's logically thought out, persuasive argument, detailing the injustices that Louisa has suffered. Olivia moves to persuade Sir Philip to see Louisa's suffering, and she asks Sir Philip to "Look on this Lady, Sir, with Eyes more human, On her whom Freeman basely has betrayed" (303). Louisa's desperate situation falls on deaf ears as Sir Philip dismisses the notion that Louisa is in fact married to Freeman with a gesture of contempt and a tirade upon the marriage customs of the Dutch. Olivia, giving her father more credit than he deserves, believes he might actually see the reality of Louisa's situation, and she says, "She has a living Witness of his Guilt. A Boy, the very Picture of the Villain," and she goes on to ask, "Can you defend his Treachary, Sir? (304). Olivia seeks Sir Philips's recognition that Ned is responsible for the child out of wedlock. As she continues to question her father's reasoning, he continues to respond obliviously to any moral code with, "Can you defend her folly?," and "Every Englishman's son, merrily begot, proves a Great Man. Fools and Cowards are the product of our wedding Sheets" (304). Sir Philip's responses, I suggest, signal two distinctions to the audience. Firstly, Sir Philip is shown as morally incompetent because he is unable to sympathize. Secondly, his questions and responses allow the audience to perceive the drastic contrast between himself and Olivia; thus, her intelligence, logic, and morality are further evidenced.

Besides questioning Sir Philip's views on Louisa, Olivia also questions his role as a parent. She says, "Are these fit Speeches for a Daughter's Ear? And this the Language of a virtuous Parent!" (304). Olivia refuses to compromise. In Sir Philip's reply his true opinion of women surfaces: "The Virtue of a Parent consists in Interest and Cunning now-a-Days, as your Sex's Modesty does in Pride and Affectation" (304). The response continues to demonstrate two important aspects of Sir Philip's questionable morality: one, his concept of parenting relies only on his desire to increase his wealth, and two, his view of women is trite and superficial, especially in light of Olivia's rational examination of patriarchy. As one feminist critic, Patsy Fowler, recently suggested, "She [Centlivre] uses her mastery of masculine language to pursue and attain her goal" (55). Fowler's analysis, I think, points to a distinct element of the above conversation. Instead of throwing a fit or reacting through disruptive emotions, both Louisa and Olivia try to speak to Sir Philip in the rhetoric of reason, thus, reversing the new political

bourgeois construction of the irrational women. As the discussion continues, Olivia responds to Sir Philip's view of women and parenting with "Monstrous precepts!," an adamant refusal to accept patriarchal constructions as the truth (304).

Not only does Olivia become a political subject through her rhetoric, but Louisa does as well because she recognizes Sir Philip's lack of morality and logic when she acknowledges he knows nothing of "justice." As the scene continues, Sir Philip commands Louisa to give up hope of ever marrying Ned. Outraged she responds, "Unmannerly Advice; but I was told before I came, what small regard you paid to Justice -------It is in you, Madam, that all my hopes are center'd" (305). Olivia responds, "Depend on me, in all I can" (305). Furthermore, prior to exiting the scene, Louisa says,

> Since injur'd Virtue is become your Sport,
> And you, instead of pitying, mock my Sorrow
> I'll try all Arts that may his Soul subdue;
> But if I fail his Passion to renew,
> The Traytor dies, to be revenged on you. (305)

Once again her articulate reasoned responses emphasize not only her reason but her intelligence as well. She speaks to Sir Philip as an equal. Louisa threatens Sir Philip intimating that any consequence she suffers, due to his lack of his humanity, will be his responsibility. This particular scene exemplifies Centlivre's critique of suffocating sexist parental control.

After Louisa's exit, Olivia exposes her father's stereotypical and harmful viewpoint of women through her reasoned refusal to concede to her father's wishes. She asks Sir Philip a number of questions:

> Why will you raise her Indignation thus?
> Do you not dread the Consequence?
> Base as he is, will you not guard his Life?
> O! call her back, and calm her Passion;
> If you prevent not, you encourage Murder. (305)

Even after Louisa's exit, Olivia tries desperately to convince Sir Philip to rethink the situation. Unfortunately, Sir Philip is unable to recognize Louisa's plight, and in one of his typical responses he says, "No, no, the Threates [sic] of your Sex, like Courtiers Promises, vanish into nothing" (305). He considers women to be deceptive beings that do not have the strength or

courage to carry out their promises. Thus he attempts to perpetuate the new bourgeois political construction of women; he sees women as weak and emotional and desires that they remain in the private sphere and allow men to dominate their lives. Besides his negative view of women, he is also obsessed with wealth. He says, "Do you think I'll throw away my Money upon your Inclination, Mistress… I would not break my word to Freeman; whilst he is Master of his Father's Estate" (306). Olivia retorts, "Are you a man yet void of all Humanity?" (305). As noted in the critique of Centlivre's other plays, the playwright purposefully exposes greedy inconsiderate men, and in this play, the greed is explicitly shown through the sorority between Louisa and Olivia.

Olivia is resolved to defend her decisions; she refuses to consider Sir Philip's rant, and she continues to question not only her father's authority but all patriarchal authority as well. Before storming off, he emphatically states, "Therefore urge me no more, but prepare to be his Wife to morrow. D'ye hear? (306). Olivia replies, "I shall have time for Resolution; and you shall find it, Father, as unalterable as your own" (306). She resolves to defy her father in marriage and continues to actively promote her own welfare. Her ending words are a threat and an assurance that the outcome of her life will be her own: "If where I've fix'd my Love, I must not wed, I'll chuse a coffin for my bridal bed" (306). She forcefully states she will marry the man of her choice, and if not, she will kill herself. The anger she incurs for her choice to remain loyal to Louisa and her choice to marry whom she wants does not dissuade her; she refuses the passive role of the traditional women and the emergent sentimental role of the moral bourgeois woman.

Centlivre's boldest example of female friendship occurs during Act 4 of *The Artifice*. Another female character, the Widow, befriends Louisa. This Widow was notified of Louisa's situation, and thus she offered Louisa a portion of her house to conduct the ruse. The Widow's offer of assistance demonstrates the crucial importance of female friendship especially when she exclaims, "You are welcome, Madam – I'll wait on you to that Apartment my cousin mentions. It is impossible Mr. Freeman should know it to be any part of my House, when he is brought in by the back door" (340). As noted above, this particular scene portrays one of Centlivre's most vivid and courageous demonstrations of friendship. Instead of turning Louisa away, as Lavinia would have done in similar circumstances, the Widow allows a woman with a child out of wedlock to take refuge. Female friendship, the play suggests, is essential to the well-being of

women around the world. The cast out Louisa is not set up for ridicule or as a model for what women should refrain from doing. She will not be mourned over as Lavinia says Calista will. Instead the problem is understood by the Widow and the solution is provided through sorority. The Widow's gesture and friendship is an example of positive space as well. To cite Kinney, she creates a space "where women can not only cease to be rivals, but actually understand, sympathize with, and respect each other" (10).

Not only does female friendship thrive within the positive spaces but Louisa's cunning and intellect does so as well, and thus, *The Artifice* validates a new type of inner female strength not apparent in her other plays. To give an overview: in this scene Louisa pretends to poison Ned, who upon realizing he is about to die, decides that he wishes to marry Louisa and take care of their son. During the entire exchange leading up to the event, Louisa demonstrates courage, wit, intellect, and "mastery" of masculine language. Prior to Freeman's entrance, Louisa says, "Oh, my Heart! Lie still, thou Flutterer! And aid me all the cunning Courage of my Sex!" (340). Louisa also mentally prepares for her meeting with Ned, realizing that in order for the artifice to succeed she must act convincingly. Her life and future happiness depend on how well she is able to trick Ned. This suggests that women can in fact be in charge of their own destinies as active agents promoting their survival.

In the scene leading up to the false poisoning, Louisa tries every alternative to lying. At the beginning of the exchange, Louisa attempts to reason with Ned and make him live up to the promises he made back in Holland. However, Ned is put off by her behavior and refuses to marry her. He says, "What a Duce shall I do with this Heifer and her Calf now!" (341). Ned shows little concern for Louisa's wishes and in a moment of stupidity he suggests, "A Lord's Mistress lives as great as his Wife, and is as much respected in our Country" (342). Louisa responds, "Monstrous, filthy Custom!" (342). She acknowledges his ridiculous suggestion for her future. She tries to convince him of her emotional attachment to his person and how much she truly loves him. He is not swayed throughout the cajoling; therefore, the play suggests that another method must be employed because some men lack reasoning skills. Upon realizing that Ned is not going to marry her, she must resort to other means, and she says, "I wish it not, nor would I seek Revenge on thee, more than on my Heart. You must drink something with me" (342). They toast to happiness, and then both swallow the drink.

Ned, after drinking, suggests that the two of them attempt to get into bed again and Louisa responds, “It must be quickly then- Or life will be too short to do it!” (343). Then in a moment of great drama she falls to her knees and says, “Forgive me, Freeman! Thou art poisoned” (343). Ned is angered and fears for his life; he exclaims, “Murdered by my Whore” (343). Clarifying the situation Louisa exclaims, “No, I’m thy Wife, thou vile Detractor! Thou wou’dst have made me that detested Thing! Shame on they Project to expose they Wife!” (343). Louisa is in complete control of the situation, and she will not stand passively by as Ned abuses her verbally. She begins to use her command of language in order to reason with Ned and force him to recognize his responsibilities to her and their child.

Louisa’s false poisoning, it should be added, exposes a stereotype of traditional women’s actions (reactions). For example, in *The Fair Penitent,* Calista must kill herself; she has no other alternative but to die in order to remove the disgrace from her name. Many plays of the eighteenth century attempted to instill a moral doctrine that was significantly more conscientious than the previous bawdy plays of the Restoration. This new type of play included sentimental and morally conscious roles such as that of Calista and Lavinia. Centlivre seems to suggest, through Louisa’s ruse, that the need for these types of roles is not only ridiculous, but laughable. Inevitably, the audience would probably find the scene of false poisoning quite humorous, which I would suggest questions the sentimental/moral plays of the time and the ideal that women should kill themselves for the greater good of society. Centlivre places Louisa in charge of the false suicide and also the false homicide, suggesting perhaps that stereotypes once recognized might in fact be used to benefit women. Louisa, by recognizing the ideal of suicide, uses it to her advantage to force Ned to feel guilt and accept his responsibilities.

I will quote much of the dialogue between Louisa and Ned, because this dialogue exposes his shallowness and forcefully portrays her virtue, honesty, and intelligence. Louisa creates the scene wonderfully well, and through her moaning and wailing rhetoric, Ned reevaluates his position and feelings toward her. Louisa begins by questioning Ned’s acceptance into heaven and the pledges he made to her.

> Call Heaven to Mind, who witness’d to your Vows;
> By whom; you swore when first out Faiths were plighted.
> It was by yon All-seeing Power above,
> At whose Tribunal we shall soon appear.

Death summons now our trembling Souls to Trial;
Stript of Excuses, Custom, and Evasion,
This guilty Deed of mine will fall to thee.
There, there our Marriage contract is recorded!
There is a Judge from whom you can't appeal:
Your Jury can't be brib'd to save you:
Your casting Witness is your broken Vows! (343-44)

She thus invokes the power of God to question Ned, and pretends she wants him to realize the pain and suffering in store for him because of his treachery. When he stands before his final judge, Louisa suggests, he will be exposed as a liar and a fraud. None of his fancy rhetoric will work, he will be "stript," and the guilt will rest not only with her but with him as well. She promises that the power from above knows Ned's actions and he will pay dearly at his death.

Oddly enough, her words strike a chord and Ned responds, "Methinks her Words pierce like a Dagger, thro' me, And more than ever, now I wish to live – Repair thy Fault and call Physicians hither" (344). Slowly he begins to recognize his dishonesty and he desires to mend his broken pledge. As he continues to recognize his mistakes, he says, "Then Heav'n have mercy on my Soul. O my Louisa! Canst thou forgive me?" (344). While Louisa is secretly pleased, she cannot openly show it, because she must continue the ruse through to the end. Ned continues to wish the situation had turned out differently and he says, "Let the holy Man be call'd! And tis most fit a Lawyer too be sent for" (344); Ned attempts to rectify the situation before it is too late. While Ned is under the impression that he is soon to perish he says, "In haste to man the last Retreat of Life! Oh! Louisa! Wou'd I had married thee," and she responds, "Do it now. 'Twill wipe off many Sins from thee. When we appear in t'other World together – The virtuous act may plead my pardon too…" (345). Louisa, then, forces Ned to conclude three things: one, that his wish to marry Olivia is unfounded because she does not love him, two his sins will catch up to him in the afterworld, and three, he in fact does wish to marry Louisa because he loves her and she loves him. Ned agrees with Louisa's critique, he repents of his wrongdoings, and the lawyer is summoned. Louisa's plan is successful and only moments later they are married.

The justification for Louisa's ruse stems from lack of choices. In other words, Louisa and her child out of wedlock had no other options, no other way to achieve respectability except

through the artifice. Critic Patsy Fowler suggests, "Not only does Centlivre challenge male authority, but she also insinuates that because women are not allowed to make the laws, they are forced to break them" (57). Here Fowler is referring to Centlivre's play *The Basset Table*; a play, which she asserts, portrays gambling as a space of freedom for women to exercise control. Her suggestion, I contend, is also relevant to *The Artifice;* it helps illuminate Louisa's position and the subsequent acceptance (by the audience) of her trickery. The play exposes the societal norm that a woman with child out of wedlock is an unacceptable individual in British society. Louisa recognizes this construct, and her lying and trickery are products of the patriarchal system that attempts to exclude her. The only way for her to cope with the restrictions is by breaking the "law," and she does so in a way that would gain acceptance from the audience. Fowler recognizes Centlivre's plays contain an "underlying message that women are capable of outwitting men" (57). Through Louisa's forced resort to trickery, she humorously outwits Ned, which proves not only her cunning and intelligence, but her political subjectivity as well.

Even though *The Artifice* was considered a failure by critics and audiences, I have attempted to show, that in fact, it is one of her boldest attempts to question many different components of patriarchal authority, restrictions of British society, and female friendship. As in *The Beau's Duel* and *The Wonder,* Centlivre continues in *The Artifice* to portray a greedy father consumed by his desires of wealth. Not only do his desires force recognition of detrimental parental control but his desires also surface, the play suggests, as outdated aristocratic beliefs which are exposed by the friendship of Olivia and Louisa. Both women refuse to compromise; they boldly stand up to Sir Philip's authority. This act of refusing to compromise creates Olivia and Louisa as political subjects. The audience hears their pleas – their fight for recognition as capable individuals. Within the entire conversation at the start of the play, Olivia and Louisa rationally attempt to persuade Sir Philip to acknowledge their separate positions and the dangerous implications of Louisa's child out of wedlock. Since his refusal is driven not by his adherence to social constructions but by his desire for wealth, the audience members, I would suggest, are forced to sympathize with the two women. This sympathy, then, builds as the play continues through the solidarity of female friendship and the intelligence of Olivia and Louisa.

The sympathy for Louisa's situation and the subsequent ruse also grows out of Kinney's concept of positive spaces. While Kinney's critique focuses on Centlivre's *The Busie Body* (and Behn's *The Rover*), her concept can also be applied to *The Artifice.* Kinney suggests positive

spaces are found through *The Busie Body* during a number of different occasions: resisting marriage to the father's chosen suitors, critiquing patriarchal authority, asserting genuine female friendship, and creating strong witty women (8-11). Throughout *The Artifice,* all of the above components of positive spaces occur repeatedly. The women continually demonstrate friendship, and I argue that through the solidarity of sorority, the critique of patriarchal authority, and the creation of intelligent female characters takes place. Not only is female friendship a positive space but it is the catalyst for all of the other occurrences of positive spaces. Thus, female friendship is the most influential aspect of Centlivre's plays, and through her radical stance on the importance of sorority, Centlivre triumphs as an eighteenth century feminist.

Furthermore, not only through the characters in her plays, but in her prologues and epilogues, Centlivre created positive spaces. Kinney suggests, "In her prologues, epilogues, and dedications, she too carried on the struggle to win legitimacy for the female voice and female experience in the early eighteenth-century theatre" (7). The prologue to *The Artifice* supports this claim. In it, she writes: "Be Heroes in a Woman's Cause to Day, And as you Love the Sex, Defend the Play" (388). Centlivre here pleads with the audience to understand women's concerns of the day. Through her writing, she suggests a connection between the characters in the play and women in society - a connection that subverts the omnipotent power of patriarchy. As in the play itself, the epilogue of *The Artifice* also suggests that women are intelligent, logical thinkers. I have quoted much of the epilogue below because it illustrates Centlivre's commitment to the advancement of women in British society.

> What think you of our Hogan-Mogan Belle?
> Didn't she trick the Trickster nicely well?
> The Whipster thought, forsooth, 'twas smart and clever,
> To swell the young Vrow up, and then to leave her.
> But on the Younker a Dutch Trick she palms;
> Poison for Poison gives, and Qualms for Qualms.
> You, who are noos'd, let me advise; beware,
> Give o'er your Jealous Freaks, and trust the Fair:
> For, look ye, you may rant, and play the Devil;
> There's nought but Patience cures the Marriage-Evil.
> The Thing is plain, and Instances are common;

No Man is half a Match for any Woman. (389)

Louisa, the “Hogan-Mogan Belle,” successfully tricks Ned into believing he is about to die; thereby, forcing him to recognize his treachery and attempt to make peace with God. Similarly Centlivre states, irresponsible men must be punished (or rather poisoned). Not only does the above quote legitimate Louisa’s ruse but it also suggests (in between the lines) that the author is complicit in the artifice. Centlivre’s awareness of the power of writing repeatedly surfaces throughout her plays but the epilogue of *The Artifice* is an explicit summons to recognize women. Through her writing, Centlivre has “tricked” patriarchy. She created a realm where Louisa, Olivia, and the Widow could be friends, and through their friendship, they overcame the stereotype of the emotional female, they forced respect from their fathers, and ultimately, they set their own goals and attained them.

CONCLUSION

Susannah Centlivre succeeded not only as a brilliant playwright but as a feminist as well. Throughout *The Beau's Duel, The Wonder,* and *The Artifice,* she portrays the female agency possible within female friendship. Female friendship, both social and political, secures spaces free from patriarchy; within these spaces women are able to question, ridicule, and decide. Though her plays underwent a number of changes throughout her career, Centlivre also consistently maintained the value and importance of women and their voices. As Patsy Fowler notes, Centlivre must be recognized for her "attempts to reform society's attitudes and thus create a more *woman-friendly* culture" (49). From one of her first plays in 1702, *The Beau's Duel,* to her final play in 1722, *The Artifice,* Centlivre sustains and supports a "woman centered culture," one that repeatedly disrupts patriarchal control and one that accepts and promotes all women.

Female friendship does, in fact, change throughout her career from overt friendship as in the disguises used in *The Beau's Duel,* to a more implicit friendship such as that offered by the Widow to Louisa in *The Artifice*. Centlivre refused to uphold conceits prevalent during the eighteenth century; in particular she rejects the stereotype of the weak emotional woman found in *The Fair Penitent.* There are no characters like Lavinia with her overzealous dedication to fraternity, nor are there any characters like Calista who waver and suffer extreme emotional anxiety. Centlivre's female community disrupts the emergent bourgeois ideal and actively promotes a new ideal woman.

Ironically, the new ideal woman emerges only through sorority; she achieves political agency not through individual achievements but instead through her female friendships. In each case from Emilia and Clarinda in *The Beau's Duel* to Isabella and Violante in *The Wonder* to Olivia and Louisa in *The Artifice,* the women maintain solidarity. Through solidarity each individual woman begins to find her own unique voice, agenda, and strength; her potential as an individual is realized through female friendship. Thus Centlivre progressively theorizes individuality through sorority. Through sisterly help the women, as individuals, are allowed to shine.

Similar to the female friendship's progressive reevaluation throughout Centlivre's plays, this idea of individuality also metamorphosed. Clarinda and Emilia accomplish very little alone; the two appear simultaneously, and they consistently help each other. Similarly in *The Wonder,* Violante and Isabella maintain their friendship consistently by appearing together always except for a few alone moments with Colonel Briton. Those particular scenes are quite short, and the women immediately reconvene to discuss the outcomes. The first two plays suggest that consistent explicit female friendship is necessary all the time. *The Artifice*, on the other hand, digresses slightly from this paradigm. While Louisa's ruse could not have been accomplished without the help of Olivia and the Widow, Louisa, in the final scenes with Ned, demonstrates her autonomy . In other words, she stands alone armed with her individual intelligence and uncompromising desire to wed Ned. Centlivre's vision of friendship while always paramount to her view of feminism was not in any way static.

Besides her revolutionary conceptions of female friendship and individuality, she also rewrites the bourgeois ideal of fraternity. Unlike fraternity, Centlivre's female friendship does not exclude men. Female friendship refuses to advocate for men as a subaltern category, and female friendship refuses to promote men as embodying innate negative personality characteristics as fraternity does. The sorority found in Centlivre's plays is in no way simply a reversal of the bourgeois fraternity. The prevalent complimentary marriages and the radically reformed husbands at the close of her plays suggest the coexistence of sorority and men. Instead of simply advocating a female friendship of exclusivity, she advocates a politics of inclusivity, where all can work for the greater good of society.

[1] All quoted material from the 1969 edition of *The Fair Penitent,* University of Nebraska Press: Lincoln.

[11] All quoted material from *The Dramatic Works of the Celebrated Mrs. Centlivre* London 1872.

[111] All quoted material from the Richard Frushell Edition *The Plays of Susanna Centlivre* New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1982.

[IV] All quoted material from *The Dramatic Works of the Celebrated Mrs. Centlivre.* London: John Pearson 1872.

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Sarah E. Fryett was born August 26, 1980 in Falmouth, Massachusetts. She packed up everything in the summer of 1998 and moved to Tallahassee, FL to attend Florida State University. She double majored in General Communication and English Literature, and she received her BA in the Spring of 2002 from FSU. Upon completion of her BA, she decided to pursue an MA in English Literature at FSU. While completing the required coursework for her MA, she also taught First Year Writing. Sarah E. Fryett will be awarded her MA in Summer 2005. She plans to continue her studies, here at FSU, in the Interdisciplinary Humanities Program in Fall 2005. She is currently working on a number of projects in the areas of Women's Studies and Gay and Lesbian Studies.