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Whether she was indeed a German princess or a Canterbury fiddler's daughter, Mary Carleton was tried, amid much publicity, on charges of bigamy and acquitted in 1663, then executed for theft at Tyburn in 1673. Her exploits provided material for twenty-six pamphlets; Francis Kirkman, author of The Counterfeit Lady Unveiled, remarked of her notoriety: "So great novelty had not been known or seen in our age, nor in any other age as I can read of. . . . It was the only talk for all the coffeehouses in and near London." Samuel Pepys recorded his attendance at a performance of A Witty Combat: or, the Female Victor, in which Carleton played the role of herself. One of the pamphlets concerning her went into a new edition as late as 1732 when London gossip had it that the Lord Mayor was her bastard son. Her story was included in collections such as The History of the Lives of the Most Noted Highwaymen, Foot-pads, House-breakers, Shop-lifts, and Cheats, of Both Sexes (1714) and Lives and Adventures of the German Princess, Mary Read, Anne Bonny, Joan Philips, Madam Churchill, Betty Ireland, and Anne Hereford (1755). References to her can be found in Defoe's Roxana, as well as in the popular Poor Robin's Almanack, as early as 1675 and as late as 1707. This satiric almanac regularly assigns a red-letter day to the German Princess, along with other parodic saints such as Sancho Panza, Doctor Faustus, Friar Bacon, Pope Joan, and the Whore of Babylon. In its 1675 edition, the "Fantasticks Chronology" opposite "The Loyal Chronology" records that four years ago "The German Princess did ride in a cart"; other entries record the passing of 5680 years since "Summer was hot weather, winter cold," and 9999 years since "Lawyers would no fees of Ciyents take." From these references, we can surmise that the German Princess had achieved ubiquitous notoriety; her contemporaries seem to have found her exploits fascinating, while excoriating her as a cheat and a whore. Ernest Bernbaum, the author of the only book-length work on the pamphlets concerning Mary Carleton, found them worthy of study as forerunners of the eighteenth-century British novel; I will be arguing that this literature provides exemplary instances of the problem of representing the female
subject in this period, for we have pamphlets written both by Mary Carleton herself and by male pamphleteers—including her husband John Carleton’s *Ultimate Vale and Kirkman’s Counterfeit Lady Unveiled*—as well as a number of pamphlets giving accounts of her trial.

The *Case of Madam Mary Carleton*, a 1663 pamphlet written by Carleton, incorporates earlier versions she wrote in her defense, *A Vindication of a Distressed Lady* and *An Historical Narrative of the German Princess*. Carleton casts her work as an appeal to Prince Rupert, Count Palatine of the Rhine, the grandson of James I, and a Royalist general during the civil war who became privy councilor to Charles II after the Restoration. In her first preface, Carleton’s desire to ally herself with this German Prince who came to England, in order to support her assertion of an aristocratic identity (as a daughter of an earl of Cologne), immediately signals her transgressive desires—to cross the boundaries of gender, class, and nation. Although she claims to have been born, like Rupert, "within the limits of that circle of the Rhine," by most accounts she was born Mary Moders, daughter of a Canterbury fiddler; she married first a Canterbury shoemaker, Thomas Steedman, then a surgeon, Thomas Day, and was tried unsuccessfully—for the first but not the last time—for bigamy. Even in this version of her life by others, Mary Carleton attempted to rise in class in the only way that was open to her, by exchanging her shoemaker husband for a surgeon.

Catherine Gallagher’s observation concerning the link between the feminism and the royalist politics of Margaret Cavendish, the Duchess of Newcastle—an aristocratic contemporary of Mary Carleton—helps to illuminate Carleton’s own obsession with the aristocracy, specifically with the “Majestical Glories of [Rupert's] Relation to th[e] Crown” (A-Av). The Duchess proudly states, in the preface to her *Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World*: “though I cannot be Henry the Fifth, or Charles the Second, yet I endeavor to be Margaret the First.” Gallagher argues that “Toryism and feminism converge because the ideology of absolute monarchy provides, in particular historical situations, a transition to the ideology of the absolute self.” Carleton’s appeal to the Prince protesting the injustice of the “Laws of this Kingdom made against Femes Covert” (A3) represents a fantasy of escape from the circumscribed legal position assigned to her as a married woman. In her desire to overcome the contingency of her identity as the wife now of a shoemaker, now of a surgeon, by styling herself a princess in her own right, “entirely possess[ing] [her father’s] estate, without any Guardian or Trustees” (p. 12), she exemplifies what Gallagher calls “the paradoxical connection between the roi absolu and the moi absolu.” As she herself appears to have been aware, she was ultimately unsuccessful in escaping the limitations placed on her as *feme covert*: she married John Carleton, who had pretended to be a lord in order to marry her; when her father-in-law—who represents in her narrative the “Compulsion of [the] Father” (p. 81)—discovered her imposture, he brought her to trial for bigamy, though she was eventually acquitted of the charge for the second time.

Mary Carleton’s feminism becomes more explicit in her second preface, addressed “to the Noble Ladies and Gentlewomen, of England.” She is careful not to offend this audience, stating: “Yet have I done nothing dishonourable to your better beloved Sex, there is nothing of lewdness, baseness or meanness in the whole carriage of this noised story, nor which I will not, cannot justify, as the actions of a Gentlewoman.” Yet she complains to the ladies about her marriage, which she calls her mishap... to miscarry in an affray; to which there are more intrigues and perplexities of kin and alliance, and necessary dependance, then to any other thing in the world... the mistaken advantages whereof, have turned to my real damage: so that when I might have been happy in myself, I must needs transplant my content into a sterile ungrateful soul, and be miserable by another.

Throughout the narrative itself, she repeatedly professes her undying regard for her husband, while at the same time lamenting his mistreatment of her: “Nor have I less affection and kind sentiments for him, whom I own and will own till death dissolve the union... He neither assisted my innocence when endangered, nor cherished it when vindicated by the law” (p. 76).

This oscillation between a transgressive feminism and a desire to legitimate herself to a more conservative audience expresses the position of a female critic of marriage writing within patriarchy. Thus this ambivalence calls into serious question the unchallenged assumption by earlier male scholars that this pamphlet was written by a male hack. Bernbaum assumes that Carleton was “aided by one or two professional writers” because of her learned citations and because her style was “astonishingly well adapted to its ends”; her “scribe assisted [her] untutored ingenuity” and lent her the “trappings that she herself was most probably too uncultivated to supply.” Bernbaum’s detection of “signs of an education superior to her own” in Carleton’s writings recalls the argument of the Anti-Stratfordians: in Shakespeare’s case, the assumption of his unworthiness was made on the basis of his class origins; in Carleton’s case, primarily on the basis of her gender, but also her class.

By the very act of writing, then, Mary Carleton implicitly questions the hierarchy inscribed in gender relations. In fact, she reveals that the adventures that form the basis of her narrative arise from her desire to transcend
her allotted position of confinement as a woman: placed early in a nunnery, she says, "the customary severity of such dealing with that sweetness and tenderness of our Sex, did much grate me; and I blindly wished I were (what my Inclinations prompted me to) a man, and exempt from that tedious life, which yet was so much the worse, because it was altogether passive and sedentary" (p. 16). The rest of the narrative recounts what she calls the "prosecution of my masculine conceptions" (p. 19), the first instance of which is to satisfy her desire "to see" (p. 19) the exiled Charles II in Cologne, a "view" (p. 20) that motivates her succeeding adventures. Here Carleton's representation of herself as a desiring (and hence masculine) subject is closely bound up with her repeated insistence on the "eye/"I" of subjectivity. The conjunction of Carleton's desiring gaze and her repeated (wishful) characterization of herself as masculine can be understood by means of Laura Mulvey's influential formulation of the "male gaze": "In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy on the female figure, which is styled accordingly." Although Carleton offers herself as such an object of the male gaze in the two portraits that preface her narrative (see illustrations, pp. 66-67), the literal double-ness of her portrait—one representing her as an innocent girl of twenty-two, the other representing her as a dignified lady of thirty-eight—calls attention to the multiplicity of roles she plays in her narrative and her refusal to be fixed in a single role by that "determining male gaze."

Just as the doubleness of the portraits subverts the conventional role of the woman as passive object of the masculine gaze, so does Carleton's outrageous double entendre on the word "case" in the tile of her pamphlet, The Case of Madam Mary Carleton, and the even more scandalous pun on her supposedly aristocratic name, Henrietta Maria de Woolway: "By this time they had obtained my Name from me, viz., Maria de Woolway, which passage also hath suffered by another leader Imposture, and allusory sound of De Volua..." (pp. 38-39). Main complains that "Mary's hack" did not leave the matter of the pun on her name to "decent obscurity." He assumes that these explicit—and "indecent"—references to female sexuality could not have been made by a woman. His denial of a woman's authorship in this instance calls attention to the profoundly unsettling effect that the materiality of writing the woman's body can have on a male readership.

In keeping with this self-representation that repeatedly tests—and flouts—the circumscribed boundaries accorded her gender, Carleton pursues her "masculine conceptions," greedily acquiring an education, learning English and French, as well as "the rest of the European Languages," reading—in addition to romances traditionally addressed to a female audience—history and "other Heroical Ad blandiments" (p. 23). It is significant in this context that "Adblandiments" is a neologism; Carleton's coinage, like her voracious reading, expresses her innovative imagination and ambition (unlike the neologisms of a canonical writer like Swift, however, it never gained entry into the OED). Although this transgressive desire to be "my own free Agent" (p. 35) evokes suppression and punishment, it also empowers the heroine—as a "notorious" but also a "notable" person (p. 2)—and generates the narrative of which she is the subject.

Mary Carleton not only writes her own story, she writes in her own defense. By including the proceedings of the trial from which she emerged victorious, Carleton challenges the gender hierarchy that closed the legal profession to women:

The fashions and customs here are much different from those of our Country, where the wife shares an equal portion with her husband in all things of weal and woe, and can libér intendere begin and commence, and finish a suit in her own name; they buy and sell, and keep accounts, manage the affairs of household, and the Trade, and do all things relating to their several stations and degrees. (p. 126)

Significantly, she claims that her father was a "Licentiat and Doctor of the Civil Law" (p. 9), and despite her disclaimer that she is "altogether ignorant of the Laws and Customs of this Kingdom" (p. 74), she repeatedly calls attention to her familiarity with the legal system and its terminology:

Being thus an Orphan, and destitute of a Procurator, as we call it in our Law, the Church as next a Kin to such estates (and claims the right and disposal of the Ward) secured me, and what I had, in their hands, until such time as I should be of age and understanding to determine of my self and my Fortunes. (p. 13)

We learn from her husband John Carleton that she took up legal studies after her acquittal: "after she removed from Newgate, she took Lodgings in Fullers Rents in Graves-Inn, In which Inns of Court I know not how or why admitted... She hath procured and retained a grand Counsellor of the Law to be her Tutor, and She is his Pupil, where she admits of no Vacation; But keeps Hillary Term altogether." In the section of her narrative recounting her trial, she not only gives a detailed transcript of the trial, including a copy of the indictment and the names of "those upright Jurors" (p. 75) who acquitted her, but she defends herself, by calling her own witnesses and by representing her acquittal—not as the defendant but rather as the attorney for the defense. In the world she creates through her writing, she is an
Figure 1. Portrait of Mary Carleton at the age of twenty-two. From The Case of Madam Mary Carleton. Reprinted by kind permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.

Figure 2. Portrait of Mary Carleton at the age of thirty-eight. From The Case of Madam Mary Carleton. Reprinted by kind permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.
articulate attorney and prosecutor of her enemies, whom she accuses of bribing witnesses in an attempt to frame her.

Carleton’s appropriation of the roles of defense attorney for herself and prosecutor of her enemies recalls the representation of the cross-dressed Moll Cutpurse in Dekker and Middleton’s *The Roaring Girl* (1611). In the course of this play, Moll—based on an actual historical figure, Mary Frith, who earlier in the century achieved the kind of notoriety that Mary Carleton did later—successfully defends herself against charges of being a “monstrous” hermaphrodite and a thief. Although other characters in the play assume that she is sexually promiscuous because of the undecidability of her gender, she in fact proves to be chaste and virtuous—shaming by comparison the citizen wives who intrigue with their gallants. When Sir Alexander Wengrave (a father-in-law corresponding to John Carleton’s father) attempts to frame her for theft, she passes the trial unscathed and instead exposes Sir Alexander’s greed in refusing to allow his son to marry a woman whose dowry he considers inadequate. Dekker and Middleton domesticate the subversive potential (and subversive actuality) of the historical Mary Frith as a figure connected to the criminal underground: their fictional Moll makes possible the marriage between Sebastian Wengrave and Mary Fitzalard by deflecting onto herself Sir Alexander’s disapproval of his son’s betrothed. By having Moll serve as an “instrument” (II, ii, 198) of its comic conclusion, *The Roaring Girl* thus reconciles the contradiction between the social order and the transgressive female subject. Despite T. S. Eliot’s praise of Moll as a “real—perpetually real—and human figure,”18 she primarily functions as a plot device and a vehicle of satire to expose the venery of the citizen wives and the greed of Sir Alexander Wengrave. The playwrights are interested in representing her not as a subject, but rather as an example of the social phenomenon of women dressing in male attire.19

By the time Mary Carleton wrote *The Case of Madam Mary Carleton*, the tradition of female transgression exemplified by the character of Moll Cutpurse was available to Carleton as a means of representing her female subjectivity. For example, she denies the accusation that she dressed like a man, thereby calling attention to the charge of cross-dressing: “such are those Chimaera’s of their framing and fancying, that I was seen in mans apparel, with a Sword and Feather, in designe to do mischief to some body” (p. 132). In fact, a little-known pamphlet, “The Female-Hector, or, the Germane Lady Turn’d Mounsieur” (1663), relates that after her acquittal Mary Carleton “grew more Valiant in her undertakings; dressing as a noble and Heroick Campion . . . . she compleatly behav[ed] her self, and with such a gallant deportment in that habit as though she had been some Mounsieur of great rank and quality.” The pamphlet concludes, “instead of the Germane Lady, she may well now be called the Germane Lord . . . . doubtlesse she would make a stout General at the head of an Army of Amazonian Ladies.”20 As Terry Castle points out, “Cross-dressing was a direct if risky way for a woman to escape those constraints—physical, economic, and psychological—imposed by rigid sex roles and the graphic demarcation of masculine and feminine spheres.”21 Carleton’s successful imposture as an aristocratic lady inevitably leads—whether in fact or in the popular imagination—to her masquerade as a man; as we have already seen in her expression of a desire to be a man while she posed as a German Princess, the transgression of one category (class) implies or entails the transgression of another (gender).22 Mary Carleton’s convincing impersonation calls into question the rationale of hierarchies in class and gender.

Carleton, moreover, reverses the domestication of Moll as practiced by Middleton and Dekker: whereas Moll Cutpurse endorses the rather conventional marriage at the play’s conclusion and thereby the social order based on such marriages—though she herself refuses to marry—Carleton, through her multiple and simultaneous marriages, quite explicitly subverts and challenges the patriarchal order that would control her as fema covert. She expresses this refusal to be defined by a single identity, a unitary self, by taking on another nationality and another social rank; by contrast, though Moll Cutpurse calls attention to the undecidability of her gender by her different costumes, her identity as Moll is never in doubt. Mary Carleton’s masquerade as a German princess thus underscores the contradiction between her subjectivity and the social order that would define her as a fiddler’s daughter and shoemaker’s wife. Her self-conscious awareness of the fictive nature of the various roles she so expertly played is expressed not only in her willingness to play the role of herself on stage, but also in the ironic caption describing one of her portraits as “the right Counterfeit”; this paradoxical phrase effectively demystifies essentialist notions of identity by calling attention to the fact that representation and self-representation can never be other than a “counterfeit.”

It is fitting, then, that Mary Carleton makes frequent and explicit references to the literary genres that most stress the element of fantasy—romance and travel narrative—as vehicles for recording her transgressive, “(Errantine) Adventure and Peregrination from the place of my native Country” (p. 6). In addition to referring to Sir John Mandeville’s narrative, she likens her “strong impuls and natural instincts to be ranging abroad, and in action” to those of “the first finders of Terra Incognita, who discovered those Regions, of whose Existence they had no further assurance then their own hopeful bodings and divinations” (pp. 14–15). In both cases, she exceeds the boundaries of gender and genre, for it is her errantry and travels—not those of the male knight or male explorer as in other romances and travel narratives—that provide the basis for these literary genres: Mary Carleton
appropriates for herself the incessant movement associated with heroes of romance and narratives of exploration. In romance, the heroine tends passively to await her reunion with the hero; in the travel narrative the native women constitute willing prizes for the conquering explorer. In her “Errant-like Adventure[s],” Carleton conforms to neither of these female roles, but instead usurps the role conventionally filled by the male protagonist. Thus the woman’s representation of her own subjectivity, in addition to transgressing the conventional bounds between genders and genres, interrogates by inverting the appropriation of and violence against women that the genres of romance and travel narrative repeatedly, if covertly, encode. This transgression not only arises from Carleton’s position as a woman writer revising and critiquing literary genres created by male writers that focus on male protagonists; it also functions as a literary expression of her transgressive life.

The pamphlets describing Mary Carleton’s trial recount the confrontation between a transgressive female subject and a legal system that seeks to represent her as a *feme covert* and that considers bigamy to be a capital crime. The pamphlets that report Carleton’s first trial agree in many, if not all, the details that they describe and therefore give us a valuable glimpse into the legal representation of female subjects during this period.

One of the pamphlets entitled *The Arraignment, Tryal and Examination of Mary Moders, Otherwise Stedman, Now Carleton, (Stiled, the German-Princess) at the Sessions-House in the Old Bayly . . . was considered to be an official and impartial account and was included in the Collection of State Trials by Thomas Bayly Howell and William Cobbett.* It gives in full the indictment read to Mary Carleton and then reports the dialogue between the clerk of the peace and Carleton as if it were a play:

*Clerk of the Peace. Mary Moders, alias Stedman, thou standest indicted in London by the name of Mary Moders late of London Spinster, otherwise Mary Stedman, the wife of, &c. . . . How sayest thou, Art thou guilty of the Felony whereof thou standest indicted, or Not guilty?*


In her capacity as defendant, Carleton asks for a day’s delay, because she was not given sufficient notice in order to call her witnesses; this request is granted, and the following day, she is allowed—again as defendant—to challenge each of the twelve (male) jurors before they are sworn, but she in fact challenges none. The pamphlet describes in detail the cross-examination of the witnesses and the accused and gives Carleton’s lengthy and eloquent speech in her own defense: she calls attention to her father-in-law’s malevolent and vindictive determination to convict her and to her accuser’s failure to produce a marriage certificate or registration; she claims that her enemies bribed witnesses, adducing the inability of her supposed schoolmates from Canterbury to identify her.

But what is perhaps most striking is the judge’s instruction to the jury to decide the case solely on whether Carleton had in fact been legally married once before, a question that depends on only one witness:

All the Evidence given on that side to prove her guilty of this Indictment, depends upon his single testimony. It is true, he says she was married at Canterbury, but the particulars or the manner of the marriage he doth not so well remember; whether by Book of Common Prayer, or otherwise . . . If she were born there, married there, and had two Children there, and lived there so long, it were easy to have brought some body to prove this. . . . You have heard what defense she has made for herself. . . . If you believe that Knot, the single witness, speaks the truth so far forth to satisfy your Conscience, that that was a marriage, she is guilty. . . . If guilty, she must die; a Woman hath no Clergy, she is to die by the Law, if guilty. . . . So that upon the whole, It is left to you to consider of the Evidence you have heard, and so to give your Evidence. (Arraignment, pp. 15–16)

Clearly the judge not only concurs with Carleton’s own claim that her accusers should have been able to produce more witnesses, but he also reminds the jury of the gravity of a guilty verdict, which would necessarily entail her execution; if she had been a man, she could have claimed benefit of the clergy by reading “next verse,” which consisted of lines from the Bible in Latin—usually the 51st Psalm. By acknowledging and even calling attention to the unequal treatment of women under the law, the judge apparently attempts to prevent the fatal consequences of such inequity. After a short deliberation, the jury returned a verdict of not guilty. The male judge and jury did not side with the father-in-law and the husband; rather, they felt either that there was insufficient evidence to convict Mary Carleton or that the inevitable punishment exceeded her offense.

Despite her dramatic victory—we are told that a great number of people in the court hissed and clapped—her acquittal of the capital crime of bigamy reaffirms her marriage to John Carleton; and we are immediately reminded of a married woman’s subordinate position in the legal system, for when she asks for her jewels and clothes to be returned, the court pronounces them to belong to her husband. In her recent book on married women’s separate
property in England, Susan Staves cites the case of Howard v. Hooker (1672–73), in which a woman’s efforts to convey her property to trustees before marriage were judged to be a fraud against the marital rights of her future husband. In this case, the husband’s expectation of acquiring his wife’s estate upon marriage was deemed justified. Yet fathers were allowed to convey a daughter’s property, and husbands, of course, were legally permitted to convey their property away from their prospective wives.26 In other words, husbands were allowed to have separate property, but wives were not, unless their fathers wished them to. Despite what appears in this instance to have been a scrupulously fair trial—and Carleton’s own able defense of herself must have had a not insignificant effect on both judge and jury—the legal system in general refused to represent women as autonomous subjects.

A 1632 book on The Lawes Resolutions of Womens Rights states:

When a small brook or little river incorporateth with Rhodanus, Humber, or the Thames, the poore Rivulet loseth her name, it is carried and recarried with the new associate, it beareth no sway, it possesseth nothing during coverture. A woman as soon as she is married is called covert, in Latin, nupta, that is, vailed, as it were, clouded and overshadowed, she hath lost her stream, she is continually sub potestate viri. Bracton termes her under the sceptre of her husband . . . I may more truly, farre away say to a married woman, her new selfe is her superior, her companion, her master . . . . 27

A 1700 legal treatise, Baron and Feme, compares the rights of married women unfavorably to the rights of infants:

Coverture is regere in Latin, and is so called for that the Wife is sub potestate viri. The Law of Nature hath put her under the Obedience of her Husband, and hath submitted her Will to his . . .

A Feme Covert in our Books is often compared to an Infant, both being persons disabled in the Law, but they differ much; an Infant is capable of doing any Act for his own advantage, so is not a Feme Covert. A Lease made by an Infant without Rent is not void, but voidable; but its void in the case of a Feme Covert. If a Feme Covert enter into Bond, Non est factum may be pleaded to it; but if an Infant enter into Bond he must plead the special matter that he was under Age. An Infant may bind himself for conveniences, as necessary for himself and Family, and the Law giveth him authority to so bind himself; but a Feme Covert cannot do so without the consent actual or implied of the Husband, because thereby she is to bind another that hath all the property in her Estate, as was the Opinion of the Lord Chief Justice Hales in Scot and Mandys Case.28

These legal descriptions of the feme covert from 1632 and 1700, framing the case of Mary Carleton, clearly illustrate the limitations placed on a married woman as an autonomous subject: her legal person existed only as a part of her husband’s, and whereas the legal status of a male Infant (literally, one unable to speak) was based on the fact that he would attain adulthood, a feme covert could never become autonomous unless her husband predeceased her. Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, explains that she felt compelled to write her autobiography “lest after-ages should mistake, in not knowing I was daughter to one Master Lucas of St. John’s, near Colchester, in Essex, second wife to the Lord Marquis of Newcastle; for my lord having had two wives, I might easily have been mistaken, especially if I should die, and my lord marry again.”29 Even an aristocratic woman such as the Duchess was afraid that her identity would be subsumed under her husband’s and therefore erased; ironically the only way she could distinguish herself from the other duchesses of Newcastle who preceed or follow her is to identify herself as her father’s daughter.

In response to his wife’s legal victory and his own defeat, John Carleton wrote his Replication and a lengthier Ultimum Vale, published at his own expense. John Carleton appears to be the first to claim that his wife did not actually write her memoirs, but instead employed a ghostwriter, even though later in the same pamphlet he repeatedly attacks her as the author. As I have already mentioned, this accusation becomes an assumption in the work of later male scholars of Mary Carleton’s writings. Although John Carleton attempts to debunk his wife’s authority as a writer, he also repeatedly asserts that he could not help being duped by her masterful theatricality and artifice. In the Ultimum Vale he asks his readers, “Imagine what you should had thought, had you been in my place and Condition; had you heard her speak this, seen her deportment . . . and observed all her probable stories and circumstances . . . and to have found her so ingenous a Woman” (p. 8). Though willing to grant her creative genius in her utterly convincing self-representation as a German Princess, and to acknowledge her “good Language . . . [and] parts” (p. 4), John Carleton is unwilling to grant her that same intelligence or rhetorical dexterity in the writing of her self-representation. Similarly, although he accuses his wife of fabricating convincing letters and stories, he asserts that she could not have written her own memoirs.

This desire to deprive Mary Carleton of authorship and hence authority can be explained by the palpable fear of emasculation by a phallic woman that runs throughout John Carleton’s pamphlet. A younger son who sought to acquire the advantages primogeniture denied him by marrying an aristocratic and wealthy woman, he feels, in his own words, “too effeminate” (p. 11) for having been Mary Carleton’s dupe; he more than once says he was
“over-powered” (pp. 10, 46) by her. This crossing of genders almost literally comes true, for the last time John sees Mary Carleton, she is clothed in man’s apparel and offers to maintain him (pp. 39–40). More important, in refuting Mary Carleton’s assertions, his writing can only arise as a response to hers, as marginal glosses to her much more impressive and autonomous self-representation:

And therefore think it not strange that I am so bitter against her in my writing, and have upon the sight of her cursed Pamphlets added such invective, but true Epithetoes to the description of her, in which upon the review of this uncomposed piece, I did insert as Marginal notes, by interlining them; For she was the Cause that moved my passion to this effect, not only by that grand abuse she offered to me in acting: but also by those scurrilous and untrue Prints, lately come forth by her order. (p. 43)

Although he repeatedly attempts to debunk Mary Carleton’s authority and her truthfulness, John Carleton oddly includes verbatim her account of the events before she met him: “for now Gentlemen I speak but at second hand, yet still I keep to my first Assertion, to write the truth, though it be of another’s relation, and this was hers to me and many others” (p. 1; emphasis added). The status of “truth” becomes vexed, for John Carleton here can only assert that he actually heard the story from Mary Carleton, but the truth of the story he goes on to tell is open to question even by his own account. By allowing her voice to overtake long stretches of his narrative, John Carleton ironically calls into question his authorship of his own “second-hand” narrative; Mary Carleton could have claimed with justice that she was the author of large parts of her husband’s narrative. The Ultimam Vale expresses John Carleton’s fantasy that his readers will overturn the court’s verdict and judge his wife guilty; but in refuting her assertions he not only repeats and confirms her story, he unwittingly writes as if he himself were on trial:

In the twelfth page of her Book she inserts a Letter as if it should come from me... To this I answer, by all my aforesaid attestations or what more any one will, I never wrote or caused to be wrote, sent or caused to be sent, or knew of any such Letter till I saw such a thing in her Book. Nay further, I was at that time and as on the day of the date of that pretended letter in Canterbury, at the house of one that calls her daughter Law, by name Richard Fould a Fidler & Alehouse-keeper, where I saw her own Mother and brethren, as he acknowledged to us. (p. 14)

As John is supposedly about to conclude his already lengthy narrative, he adds a long postscript upon hearing of the publication of The Case of Madam Mary Carleton. Because his writing reacts to hers, his pamphlet can never be complete in itself:

And if she moves me further, she shall find I will let her blood in the right Vein, and compleat the whole History of her and her actions, which by my directions and order shall be brought to view. I will (if her impudence stirs further) send her Companions enough, such Satyrs, as she had better have no being then to feel the smart of their sharp wounding lashes. (p. 46)

John appears dimly aware that he can never “compleat the whole History of her and her actions”; failing such a representation, he tries to disfigure her satirically, but instead he unwittingly contributes to her celebrity: “And when I asked her how she lived so high, she replied she was cried up for a Wit” (p. 39). The only paradigm that enables him to make sense of his experience and to recover some self-respect is the Christian rhetoric of victimization: calling himself a “highly abused Christian,” he concludes, “as it is well observed they are subject to evil, whose vertuous life least deserves it; but it is better to be passive and suffer, then active and do any injurious evil” (p. 47). At the conclusion of his narrative, his Ultimam Vale, or final farewell, begins to take on martyr-like overtones.

Unlike John Carleton’s Ultimam Vale, which fails to vindicate the author, but on the contrary enacts his own self-debunking—he himself admits, “the method of my writing here represents the confused state of my mind” (p. 39)—Francis Kirkman’s The Counterfeit Lady Unveiled (1673) allowed its author to capitalize on Mary Carleton’s celebrity. While John Carleton unsuccessfully attempts to oppose and refute Mary Carleton’s account, Kirkman succeeds by identifying with the transgressive female subject that he seeks to represent.

Kirkman prefaces his narrative with a discourse on the difficulty of representing a female subject, of penetrating a woman’s “privacy” (p. 8). Seeking to stabilize her protean identities, he includes only one of the two portraits—representing the younger Mary Carleton—that preface the Case, describing it as the “true original picture as it was taken by her own order and appointment” (p. 10). Referring to this portrait, which serves as frontispiece to The Counterfeit Lady Unveiled, Kirkman states, “If you behold her picture, and did know her or ever see her, you will conclude it very like...” (p. 11). The problem lies, he says, in representing “her inside” as opposed to “her outside” (p. 11). He finds it difficult to give “a true account of her whole life,” for “how can truth be discovered of her who was wholly composed of falsehood?” (p. 12). He attempts to avoid “misrepresenting anything of her...”
(p. 12) by weighing evidence drawn from both her and her enemies, from books written both to defend and to attack her. In so doing, he contradicts her version of her birth, declaring that she was an "absolute" if not "true" Englishwoman.

Yet just as Mary Carleton included the claims about her Canterbury origins in order to refute them, so Kirkman includes Carleton's version of her aristocratic and foreign origins in order to refute them. Moreover, Kirkman perhaps unwittingly dignifies Carleton's imposture by comparing her to Perkin Warbeck, who "gave out himself to be heir of the crown of England... and did so well personate the Prince himself and was so well backed on by others that he without any difficulty persuaded several kings and princes of the truth of his assertion..." (p. 13). As a prominent Restoration compiler and publisher of Jacobean drama, Kirkman probably has in mind here the almost heroic representation of Perkin Warbeck in John Ford's play of that name. Just as the accounts of Mary Carleton's trial recorded her speech in her own defense, so Kirkman's increasingly sympathetic treatment of her culminates in his giving over an entire section of his narrative to her Case: "The aforesaid book I examined and, comparing it with her husband Carleton's report, could not find it or her guilty of any considerable untruth; therefore I shall, in the continuation of her story, give it you as she hath related it" (p. 22). Again, as in John Carleton's Ultimam Vale, Mary Carleton's narrative, in her own voice, invades Kirkman's narrative even as he claims to demystify her and unveil her falseness. Kirkman becomes a ventriloquist for Mary Carleton, a mouthpiece for the object of his investigation. Although John Carleton and Kirkman's pamphlets diverge widely in literary quality, Mary Carleton's compelling self-representation irresistibly usurps both these male writers' attempts to represent her.

Kirkman's identification with Mary Carleton remains implicit and unacknowledged in this pamphlet, but his self-representation in his autobiography, The Unlucky Citizen (1673), published the same year as The Counterfeit Lady Unveiled, makes the identification unavoidable. Both Carleton, according to Kirkman, and Kirkman himself, as related in The Unlucky Citizen, were addicted to romances. Kirkman tells us that Carleton was well read in Parismus and Parisomenos, Don Bellanias of Greece, and all those other books that related to love and arms; she proceeded to Amadis de Gaul, and reading of his fair lady, the Princess Oriana, she oftentimes fancied herself to be some such princess or at least wise a lady of honour that did belong to her.

(Counterfeit Lady, p. 15)

Of his own reading habits, he says in The Unlucky Citizen: "when I came to Knight Errantry, and reading Montelion Knight of the Oracle, and Ormatus and Artesia, and the Famous Parismus; I was contented beyond measure, and (believing all I read to be true) wished my self Squire to one of these Knights: I proceeded on to Palmier of England, and Amadis of Gaul." Kirkman's concrete imagining of the private genesis of Carleton's desire for social mobility (found in no other pamphlet concerning Carleton) coupled with the striking coincidences in these two passages shows that Kirkman considers his moments of most private self-absorption—reading romances and fantasizing about them—to be feminine. Unlike Mary Carleton who actually took steps to make her fantasy a reality, Kirkman is content to live in the world of imagination at this point. True to Freud's essay on the family romance, Kirkman fantasizes that just as Amadis and other knights were initially ignorant of their noble parentage, so he "might in time prove to be some great Person" (p. 11). The young Kirkman at first resolves to be a surgeon because surgeons were often mentioned in books of knight errantry and because a surgeon might travel to exotic places such as Constantinople and Trebizond (p. 12).

Kirkman must forego this fantasy of mobility when his father apprentices him to a scrivener. Kirkman's relationship with his master closely resembles Carleton's ambivalent relationship to her husband. He initially appears to justify rebellion against his master by arraigning the unfair treatment of apprentices by masters: "Me thinks it is a very unhandsome and unequal thing, that Apprentices should be thus used, for he that is an Apprentice at present, in short time he is to be out of his time, and then he is a Companion for his Master, and it may be a better man than he; and why then should he be thus tumbled and tossed, and put to those unhandsome Employments?" (Unlucky Citizen, p. 37). Yet like Carleton, Kirkman moves to a more conservative position: "let me tell thee Reader, whoever thou art, if an Apprentice, that I consider the Tye of an Apprentice to be, for the time, as solemn as that of Matrimony: for we should resolve to live together as married folks do, for better for worse, for rich or for poor, in sickness and in health" (p. 52). In fact, Kirkman's analogy indicates the close relationship between the social and economic subordination in apprenticeship and in marriage, with the significant difference that the apprentice, unlike the wife, can look forward to becoming a master some day. Kirkman eventually settles on the trade of a bookseller, and through his translations, he claims the title of gentleman:

the Name of the Translator being plac'd on the Title-page in large Characters, there was added the honoured Word Gent. to import that the Translator was a Gentleman, that he was every Inch of him in his own imagination, and did believe that the so printing that word on the Title of the Book, did as much entitle him to Gentility, as if he had Letters Patents for it from the Heralds Office. (pp. 181-82)
Like Carleton, Kirkman considers that published self-representations afford some fulfillment of fantasies of advancement. Although as bookseller and translator Kirkman finally finds an outlet for his fantasy of upward mobility, his trade associates him even more closely with women: the printer for The Unlucky Citizen is Anne Johnson, and in the catalogue of plays available for sale at his shop, Kirkman stresses the importance of female playwrights, though they may be greatly outnumbered: “I observe that Plays were written... by... not only Male, but Female Writers; there being seven of them in all, four whereof in these last hundred.”

Kirkman identified closely with his “dear, loving, and indulgent Mother” (p. 49) who came from a class higher than his father, and whose early death, he feels, thrust him into his “unlucky” life. In keeping with Kirkman’s representation of himself as feminine—in the roles of avid reader of romances, apprentice, and bookseller—he genders his own imagination as female, on one occasion likening himself to a pregnant woman as he translates the last part of Amadis of Gaul: “Never did young Big-belly’d Woman desire to see the Fruit and Issue of her Body, as I did to see my Book finished” (pp. 178–79). This association of the imagination with the female becomes most striking in the episode that relates his mother’s death:

She was desired by one of her friends to go with her to the Hospital, to see her Maids Breast (which was cancer’d) cut off; she went and saw it, but took such a conceit with it that cost her her life, for she presently at the very instant of cutting off the Maids Breast, felt a pain and pricking in her own... this Conceit so wrought upon her, that it proved what she conceived it, and her Breast was really cancer’d, and that in such manner, that notwithstanding all the Remedies she took, it in few Months kill’d her. (pp. 48–49)

The imagination is both feminine and deadly; it kills not only Kirkman’s mother, but also Mary Carleton, who serves as his female alter ego both in acting out her imaginative exploits and in being punished by death for such transgressions. According to Kirkman, while awaiting her execution for theft, Carleton

made a speech which tickled the ears of all that were present, talking of the frailness of human nature, and that these crimes, which men would slip through and make nothing of, were accounted highly criminal with women; but before the great tribunal in heaven, men and women should then have equal justice, adding that it was an unworthy action in men to come only to behold that poor soul there as a wonder, when indeed she was more like a looking glass. “Yes, indeed,” replied the prisoner. “I am very like a looking glass wherein you may all see your own frailties.” (Counterfeit Lady Unveiled, p. 97)

Kirkman prefaches this passage by an emphatic statement that “I myself” went to visit her in prison; his extraordinary insertion of himself in the narrative again emphasizes his ambivalent identification with Mary Carleton, who may have been a criminal but was nevertheless a clear-sighted critic of the inequity of her position as a woman in patriarchy. In light of this mirroring relation across genders, it is fitting that Kirkman should use the adjective “unlucky” to describe both his life and Mary Carleton’s. He calls his narrative of his own life an “unlucky extravagant [that wandered] to four Printing houses, whereas it was designed to be printed at one, by which means it hath gathered more faults and errata’s then ordinary” (p. 1). He sums up Mary Carleton’s life and concludes his narrative of her life in the same terms: “Thus have I brought this unlucky woman from her birth to her burial” (p. 102). Although Kirkman identifies with Mary Carleton throughout The Counterfeit Lady Unveiled, the syntax of this final sentence reveals that he has represented her in order to participate in her destruction; unlike John Carleton who attempted unsuccessfully to disfigure her, Kirkman accomplishes his aim by including her execution in his narrative.36

At the end of her narrative, Mary Carleton emerges as the “female victor”—to borrow the title of the play in which she acted—in both her trial and her rhetorical competition with her husband. Although her husband John Carleton possessed unassailable legal rights over her, posterity knows of him only because he was her husband (he did, however, achieve a measure of success in convincing later male scholars to deny Mary Carleton authorship of her writings). Francis Kirkman, like John Carleton, allows his discourse to be dominated by Mary Carleton, but it is Kirkman alone who, in representing Mary Carleton, has the final word. This became quite literally true, for not only did he write after her execution for theft in 1673, but The Counterfeit Lady Unveiled has appeared in a modern edition, while Mary Carleton’s Case has not.37 Both writers express a desire to cross divisions between genders—Carleton wanting to be a man, Kirkman identifying with his mother and with Carleton—and both express a similar involvement with romance narrative as a partial imaginative response to real social discontent. Yet the consequences of representing the female subject are widely divergent for Carleton and Kirkman. Appropriating Carleton’s narrative and capitalizing on her notorious execution brought Francis Kirkman success as a writer and allowed him to claim the title of gentleman. (Significantly, there are no modern editions of Kirkman’s autobiography, The Unlucky Citizen.) Rebellling against her circumscribed position as femin covert, Mary Carleton achieved a convincing and fascinating representation of herself in her writing and in her life; this creative self-representation
brought her celebrity, but it did not ultimately legitimate her as a lady or bring her success as a gentleman. Her notoriety as a masterful impostor, in fact, may have helped her escape from petty larceny, for which she was hanged at Tyburn.

NOTES

Earlier versions of this essay were presented at the 1989 Modern Language Association convention, in a session on “Transgression, Masquerade, and Desire: Representing the Female Subject in Restoration and Eighteenth-Century England,” and at the 1990 Shakespeare Association of America conference, in a seminar on “Renaissance Women as Readers and Writers.” I would like to thank especially the organizers of the SAA seminar, Margaret Ferguson and Ann Rosalind Jones, for providing an ideal forum for my work. Thanks also to Tassie Gwilliam, Arthur Kinney, Frank Palmeri, and the two anonymous readers for Tuls Studies in Women’s Literature for helpful suggestions.

1 See the bibliographic essay by C. E. Main, “The German Princess; or The Carleton in Fact and Fiction,” Harvard Library Bulletin, 10 (1956), 166–85.


6 Bernbaum’s book elaborates the thesis that the “biographical writings concerning Mary Carleton serve to illuminate the course of the English realistic novel in its obscurest period” (p. 2). Main praises The Case of Madam Mary Carleton for “its concrete detail, its attention to motivation of characters, dialogue—in short, many of the elements of fiction” (p. 174). See also the more recent discussion by Michael McKeon, The Origins of the English Novel: 1600–1740 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), pp. 241–44. McKeon discusses Mary Carleton’s narrative in terms of the ideological implications of generic models—in her particular case, romance forms that express a desire for social mobility (p. 241). While Bernbaum (p. 13) and Main (p. 177) concern themselves with the issue of fact versus fiction in Carleton’s story, in order to claim that the fictional aspect of the narratives directly influenced the rise of the novel, McKeon emphasizes instead the “unusually insistent connection, made between claims of truthfulness in narration and claims of status and virtue” (p. 243).

7 Mary Carleton, “To His Most Illustrious Highness Prince Rupert; Count Palatine of the Rhine, and Duke of Cumberland, &c., The Case of Madam Mary Carleton, Lately stiled The German Princess; Truly Stated: With an Historical Relation of her Birth, Education, and Fortunes: in an Appeal to his Illustrious Highness Prince Rupert (London, 1663), sig. A3v. Subsequent references will appear parenthetically in the text.

8 In the Case, Carleton celebrates her supposed birthplace of Cologne for “that modern glory it received by the entertainment of the King of Great Britain, who was most hospitably and cordially, and with all imaginable respect and honor treated here, when by virtue of Cromwell’s League with France, he departed that Kingdom” (p. 7). She explains her passage to England as motivated by her favorable impression of the royalists attending the king (p. 8). Conversely, she exhibits her contempt for the lower classes: “I knew not what belonged to vulgar and Plebian customs or conditions, and they that idly tax my discourses and behaviour with mimick pedantry, know not the generous emanations of a right born soul” (pp. 29–30). She goes on to excoriate “the low spiritedness, and pittyful ignorance of such Mechanick and base people” (p. 30).

9 Margaret Cavendish, “To All Noble and Worthy Ladies,” The Description of a New World; Called the Blazing World (London, 1668), n. p.


11 Gallagher, p. 25.

12 Carleton’s second preface, “To the Noble Ladies and Gentlewomen of England,” is not paginated.

13 Bernbaum, pp. 12, 20, 22, 24. See also Main, pp. 173–76, for repeated references to Mary’s huck, “Mary’s press agent,” and “Mary’s ghost writer.” But see Elaine Hobby, Virtue of Necessity: English Women’s Writing, 1649–88 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1989), pp. 95–96, who refutes these attempts to deny authorship to Carleton by adducing her “great skill with words” and ability to speak several languages. She concludes that Carleton “was unusually well educated for a woman of the day, however she might have acquired her learning.”


15 Main, p. 176. Janet Todd points out that it was this kind of “immodest” expression that Defoe declared he was modestly omitting from his account of his Carleton-like rogue, Moll Flanders,” in The Sign of Angelica: Women, Writing and Fiction, 1660–1800 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), p. 55.

16 Bernbaum silently changes “Abblendants” to “ablandsments” (p. 23).


19 Mary Beth Rose has shown the links between Moll Cutpurse and the Hie Muller and Haec Vir pamphlets (1620) in *The Expense of Spirit: Love and Sexuality in English Renaissance Drama* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), pp. 64–92.

20 "The Female Hector, or, the German Lady turned Mousieur" (London, 1663), p. 8. Neither Bernbaumb nor Main mentions this pamphlet in their bibliographies of pamphlets concerning Mary Carleton.

21 Terry Castle, "Matters not fit to be mentioned: Fielding's *The Female Husband*," *ELH*, 49, No. 3 (1982), 605.

22 On the relationship between categories of gender and class, see Mary Poovey, *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988). She finds that "in the 1840s and early 1850s in particular, gender issues often displaced the more politically volatile issue of class so as to address and manage it symbolically" (p. 18).

23 Hobby sees Carleton's relationship to her literary models as less conflicted than I do; noting Carleton's extensive use of "romance clichés," she says that Carleton "conforms closely to fictional conventions" (pp. 92, 94). McKeon, however, sees Carleton's narrative as an exemplary instance of the gap between "the romance model [and] the unpropitious setting of modern life." He further argues that "established narrative forms cannot provide precedents that would satisfy the full extent of Mary's ambition for mobility" (p. 241).

24 Bernbaum, p. 12.

25 The Arraignment, Tryal and Examination of Mary Moders, Otherwise Scheidman, Now Carleton, (Syled, the German Princess) at the Sessions-House in the Old Bailey, being brought Prisoner from the Gatehouse Westminster, for having two Husbandes; viz., Tho. Siedman of Canterbury Shoemaker, and John Carleton of London, Gent. Who upon a full Hearing was acquitted by the Jury on Thursday, June 4, 1663 (London, 1663), p. 2. Subsequent references will appear parenthetically in the text.


30 John Carleton brings up more than once the issue of his being a "younger Brother": "notwithstanding I objected my inequality of Birth & Fortune, the last whereof I attested was not as yet a younger Brother Portion, though a younger Brother, & denied that it was fit to carry single, which was the more" (p. 9); "(said she). . . .(I) did use to say to my Governess. . . . that I would marry a private civil Gentleman, and a younger Brother, and one that is free from the wickedness and debauchery of all Courts" (p. 17).

31 See McKeon's discussion of *The Unlucky Citizen*, pp. 244–48. He considers it to be an "extraordinary autobiography" that vacillates ambivalently between confessional spiritual autobiography and picaresque narrative (p. 244).


35 "A True, perfect, and exact Catalogue of all the Comedies, Tragedies, Tragi-Comedies, Pastoral, Masques and Interludes, that were ever yet Printed and Published, till this present year 1671, all which you may either buy or sell, at the Shop of Francis Kirkman, in Thames-Street, over against the Custom House, London," n. p.

36 Mulvey's definition of voyeuristic sadism characterizes Kirkman's narrative well: "pleasure lies in ascertaining guilt (immediately associated with castration), asserting control, and subjecting the guilty person through punishment or forgiveness. This sadistic side fits well with narrative. Sadism demands a story, depends on making something happen, forcing a change in another person, a battle of will and strength, victory/defeat, all occurring in a linear time with a beginning and an end" (p. 64).

37 Reflecting the recent interest in women's writing and women's autobiography in particular, excerpts of the Case have been published in *Her Own Life: Autobiographical Writings by Seventeenth-Century Englishwomen*, ed. Elspeth Graham, Hilary Hinds, Elaine Hobby, and Helen Wilcox (New York: Routledge, 1989), pp. 135–46.