ON THREE LATE MARRIAGES

[Early 1682]

All three of the women pilloried here had Court connections. Mall Hinton was the daughter of a Court physician, Sir John Hinton. Elizabeth Barry and Charlotte Butler were well known actresses, dependent on the Court for patronage and protection. In addition, Mrs. Barry had been mistress to John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, by whom she had a daughter in 1677, and Mrs. Butler, said to be the daughter of a decayed knight, was recommended to the stage by King Charles II himself. All three women had a trade in common, the Oldest Profession. To the best of my knowledge, none of the three distinguished trollops ever married.

The copy text, undated, is Harleian MS. 6913, p. 345. The satire is undated also in Harvard MS. 633, "The Wedding," p. 13. The references to the Russian Court tend to date the poem early in 1682.

Three nymphs as chaste as ever Venus bred,
As fair as ever pressed a nuptial bed,
So innocently pure in all their lives
They ne'er profanely thought of being wives,
Now under Hymen's yoke demurely bow;
See what our men of wit and love can do!
But know my pious Muse does blush to tell
How wretched Macarene by incest fell,
And 'tis too sad a story to relate
The truth of Canace's unhappy fate.

First then my serious poem I will crown
With one of most repute about the town,
Nay, ev'n in the Russian Court of great renown.
Fine Mrs. Hinton challenges the place
Due to her birth, her stature, and her face,
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A wit sufficient with a peevish grace;  
All which she strictly maintains to th' height,  
As being the daughter of a doughty knight.  
A greater champion never lancet drew,  
Who more than Samson or Drawcansir slew.  
But when the hero bowed his head to fate,  
He left her neither portion or receipt,  
Two trifles that had well become her state.

No nymph more gallants e'er received or scorned,  
Nor for whose sake more am'rous youths have burned.  
Like death she spares no quality nor age,  
From gentleman to cit, from lord to page.  
And whether 'tis that all her spirits combined  
And actuate her body by her mind,  
Or else that art to her relief she brings,  
And from experience her perfection springs,  
I boldly dare maintain whene'er she's pleased,  
Of all the town she does the feat the best.  
But then her humor's insolent and lewd,  
As though it were beneath her to be good.  
Her keeper's self can never swive secure,  
And 'tis her greatest pride to make him poor.  
But now an honorable spouse she gets;  
That is the easiest way of paying debts.  
Happy the knight by all the world is thought,  
Who such a prize from all the lists has got.  
So once a British monarch did in vain  
Aspire alone to th' empire of the main,  
Which gave free trade to all the world before,  
And will again when once the land is poor.  
In the front boxes now she takes her place,  
And troth a ladyship becomes her face.  
No Richardson nor Peters she'll endure  
By different ways her body to secure.  
Now cully Arundel has lost his whore,  
And bully Chevens must unrig no more.
But slattern Betty Barry next appears,  
Whom every fop upon the stage admires,  
But when he sees her off he hangs his ears.  
With mouth and cunt, though both awry before,  
Her cursed affectation makes 'em more.  
At thirty-eight a very hopeful whore,  
The only one o'th' trade that's not profuse,  
A policy was taught her by the Jews.  
Though still the highest bidder she will choose,  
Which makes her all the captain's love forget,  
And nauseous St. Johns to her arms admit;  
Her fifty shillings a week has raised her price.  
Besides her other charming qualities,  
As dewlaps hanging down her tawny thighs  
And ever moistened with congenial glue,  
Just like the bull that fierce Almanzor slew;  
Besides an odoriferous perfume,  
Which yet, like strength of cordials, may o'ercome.  
So, with the gums of all Arabia blessed,  
The Phoenix lies dissolving in its nest,  
But the predominant sense that strikes the brain  
Are the divine effluences of her grain.  
And have you got at last a husband? Then  
What jubilees will be at Surrenden!  
If thou art married, Charles, and truly grieved,  
As Barry fain would have it be believed,  
For thy own sake this life and follies end;  
Thy New Year's gift was sent thee by a friend.  

But Butler, Oh, thou strumpet termagant!  
Can'st thou pretend to husband or gallant?  
Even to thy own profession a disgrace,  
To set up for a whore with such a face!  
Who but an Irish fool would make this choice,  
Though slighted Echo nothing but a voice.  
Thy goose skin arse and of the chestnut brown  
Is tanned by being often exposed to th' sun;
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Yet for thy sake do May and Barry strive
Who most shall scorn a father or a wife.
Has Bab for this so oft beguiled the purse
And groaned beneath a suff'ring nation's curse?
Or is it always Heaven's peculiar care
A knave should have a coxcomb for his heir?
May all my whores such easy husbands meet,
And all my foes such virtuous spouses get.


13. *th' Russian Court.* On November 24, 1681, John Evelyn witnessed the reception of the Russian Ambassador and his retinue in the Banqueting House. On January 26, 1682, a correspondent wrote that the Russian Ambassador "is soe taken with Moll Hinton that he intends to carry her over with him" to Russia (*Rutland MS, II, 64*). Apparently he changed his mind.


40. *the knight.* Presumably the Russian Ambassador.

42. *a British monarch.* King Edgar (944-75), who is supposed to have called himself Rex Marium Brittaniae (see Pepys, April 16, 1665).

48. *Richardson.* Perhaps Sarah Richardson, a well-known midwife (see *House of Lords MS, III, 59*). *Peters.* Probably Charles Peter, or Peters (1648-1705), a chirurgion (*Musgrave's Obituaries*).

50. *cully Arundel.* Henry Howard, Earl of Arundel, son of the sixth Duke of Norfolk, was called "cully" because he was easily duped, especially by his wanton wife, Mary.

51. *bully Chevins.* In 1668 William Chiffinch succeeded his brother Thomas as Page of the King's Bedchamber and Keeper of the Privy Closet. A gross libertine, he was chief pimp to King Charles II.

52. *Barry.* Elizabeth Barry (1658-1713), said to be the daughter of one Robert Barry, a barrister, was the greatest actress of the age, beautiful on-stage, but homely off. According to Anthony Aston, "this fine creature was not handsome, her mouth op'ning most on the right side, which she strove to draw t'other way" (*An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber,* "A Brief Supplement," ed. R. W. Lowe, 1889, II, 302).

57. *thirty-eight.* In 1682 Elizabeth Barry was twenty-four.

61. *the captain's love.* According to William Oldys, "Captain" Thomas Otway, the dramatist, was desperately in love with Mrs. Barry, but she refused him, "for she could get bastards with other men, though she would hardly condescend to grant
Otway a kiss, who was as amiable in person and address as the best of them” (MS note to Langbaine’s *Account of the English Dramatick Poets*, 1691, British Museum).

62. *St. Johns.* Henry St. John, a foolish and violent rake, inherited as fourth baronet in 1708 and became Viscount St. John in 1716. He was the father of Henry, Viscount Bolingbroke.

63. *fifty shillings.* The usual wage for an actress was thirty to forty shillings a week; see Wilson, *All the King’s Ladies*, p. 38.


73. *Grain.* Groin?

76. *Charles.* Charles Dering, second son of Sir Edward Dering, of Surrenden, Kent. If he had indeed married Mrs. Barry, there would have been mourning at Surrenden. Charles was a drunken young rake. On April 27, 1682, Charles fought with one Mr. Vaughan on the stage of the Duke’s Theatre, and Charles was “dangerously wounded” (*Impartial Protestant Mercury*, May 2, 1682).

80. *Butler.* Charlotte Butler, a handsome brunette actress with the Duke’s Company, was famed as a singer. She may have been the “Mrs. Butler” who doubled as Plenty and an African Woman in Crowne’s *Calisto*, February, 1675 (Eleanor Boswell, *The Restoration Court Stage*, 1932, p. 198).

85. *Echo.* A beautiful nymph condemned by Juno to lose her voice except to repeat what was said to her. “Slighted” by her beloved, Narcissus, she faded away until there was nothing left of her but her voice.

88. *May and Barry.* See below, “Satire on both Whigs and Tories,” 1683,

    While witless cuckold May to sea is gone,
    And left his wife with Barry to fuck on.

A marginal note to this couplet in Harleian MS. 7317, identifies these as “Bab May Sea Capt” and “Sr John Barry.” Baptist May (c. 1627–98) was never a sailor. Keeper of the Privy Purse to King Charles II, he died unmarried, leaving a natural son, Charles (under age in 1698), and a nephew, also Charles, an Equerry to Queen Mary (G. Steinman Steinman, *Memoir of Mrs. Myddleton*, 1864, p. 55). He may have had another natural son. One Richard May, a “Sea Capt,” was captain of a succession of war ships from 1665 to 1683. On November 18, 1682, he commanded the *Ruby*; he died shortly before September 23, 1683. Sir John Berry had his first sea command in 1665. He was captain of the frigate *Gloucester* bearing the Duke of York to Scotland, when, on May 6, 1682, it struck the Lemon and Oar Sands and sank with the loss of some two hundred lives. On June 15, 1682, Sir John Berry, absolved from blame, was appointed to command the *Henrietta*. He died in February, 1690. See *Catalogue of Pepysian MSS*, ed. J. H. Tanner, 1903, I, 324, 383; and *Finch MS*, p. 186.