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A Tragic Farce: Revolutionary Women in Elizabeth Inchbald's *The Massacre* and European Drama

Wendy C. Nielsen

This essay examines Elizabeth Inchbald's treatment of French Revolutionary women and relationship to European drama in order to appreciate the implications of tragic writing for British women playwrights. Focusing on Inchbald's connections to French culture and English theater in late 1792 and early 1793 elucidates the self-censoring and generic conventions of her only tragedy, The Massacre. Events in France like the September Massacres unsettled Burkean notions of femininity and raised the possibility of female violence. This mixing of traditional gender characteristics resembles discourse about Inchbald's dramas as neither tragic, comic, nor tragicomic. The genre of tragic farce describes Inchbald's revisions of French sentimental comedy (comédie larmoyante) and experimentations with the evolving form of drama (drame). Inchbald's adaptation of Gresset's The Villain (Le Méchant) into a farce, Young Men and Old Women, demonstrates techniques applied to The Massacre and Every One Has His Fault. The paper concludes with a comparison of The Massacre to its source, Louis- Sébastien Mercier's drama, Jean Hennuyer, or the Bishop of Lizieux (1773), the first documentation of this once-uncertain genealogy. This comparative analysis shows that Inchbald's tragedy critiques the comic improbability that women stand to lose their femininity if they involve themselves in public issues.

Elizabeth Inchbald wrote her only tragedy, *The Massacre*, using sources from the European theater of war, and yet its relationship to French drama has remained uncertain.¹ This essay documents the French sources of *The Massacre* and explores their significance to Inchbald's experimentation with dramatic genres. Written in the

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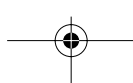
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autumn of 1792, this three-act play about the death of Madame Tricastin and her children references massacres occurring in Paris at the time. French Revolutionary women surface in the popular prologue to the comedy produced immediately after composition of *The Massacre, Every One Has His Fault*:

5 *The Rights of Women*, says a female pen,
 Are, to do every thing as well as Men.
 To think, to argue, to decide, to write,
 To talk, undoubtedly—perhaps, to fight.
 10 [For Females march to war, like brave Commanders,
 Not in old Authors only—but in Flanders].²

15 *Every One Has His Fault* had already been postponed owing to the beheading of the king of France when it finally premiered on January 29, 1793. A voice of moderate conservatism, Reverend Nares probably wrote the prologue in close consultation with Elizabeth Inchbald.³ Spoken by William Farren playing the rigid patriarch Lord Norland, the prologue anticipates and deflects British fears that some of the radical subjects of the play, such as divorce and misalliance, imply other French sympathies, from the rights of woman to an army of women. In addition to female soldiers fighting in the Vendée, Revolutionary women from French politics such as the author of *The Declaration of the Rights of Woman and Citizen* (1791) Olympe de Gouges and Paris's own "Amazon" Théroigne de Méricourt raised concerns that participating in public life "unsexed" women, turning them into men.⁴ In Burkean terms, the French Revolution threatened to rob Englishwomen of their delicacy, virtue, and femininity. Conservative reviewers from the pro-Pitt paper, *True Briton*, denounced *Everyone Has His Fault* as dangerously Jacobin.⁵ This essay addresses the other critique made by the *True Briton*, that of genre: "'tis neither Comedy, nor Tragi-Comedy, but something anomalous in which the two are jumbled together" (qtd in Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre* 49). This generic critique, as Moody suggests, camouflages the critic's political objections to the play. Yet even Inchbald's politically liberal friend William Godwin, in his anonymous review for *European Magazine*, questions interweaving a "tragic tale" with a comedy (106).

20 Under the etymology of the first meaning of genre (kind, sort, style), the *Oxford English Dictionary* cross-references the term gender. This essay examines the implications of tragic writing for a woman playwright like Elizabeth Inchbald. *Every One Has His Fault* is considered a success because it ran for thirty-two nights in a "politically charged" atmosphere (Greene 48). Conversely, it was the first new play the author had produced with success at Covent Garden since publishing *A Simple Story*.⁶ The last stanza of the prologue mentions the trials of a "Comic Muse perhaps ... growing old" (*Every One* n.p.). Though Inchbald was at the peak of her literary career in 1792, the two-act farce *Young Men and Old Women* was not received well, and *The Massacre* never circulated outside the Godwin circle. These plays and their connection to European drama raise the possibility that gender and genre are connected in ways that parallel the syncretism, in Inchbald's dramatic universe, of what Daniel O'Quinn identifies as the "heteronormative constructions" of men and women's behavior, on the one hand, and threats of violence on the other (O'Quinn, "Scissors and Needles"

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106). Through the specter of the French Revolutionary woman, Inchbald presents a bifocal view: the tragedy of the abandoned woman, and the comic improbability that women might lose their femininity by practicing self-defense.

It would be a mistake to see the tragic and the comic as antithetical in Romantic drama, which blends, challenges, and complicates traditional boundaries between Classical genres. In *The Death of Tragedy*, George Steiner defines the “romantic vision of life” as “non-tragic” because it offers redemption and accommodates remorse (128). “This bias toward the ‘near-tragic’ controls the romantic theatre even where the subject seems least susceptible to happy resolution” (135). Thus, that precise distinguisher of genres, Friedrich Schiller, titles *The Maid of Orleans* “a romantic tragedy” (*eine romantische Tragödie*) because his Joan of Arc dies in glory on the battlefield and not on the stake. Steiner points to another word for “near tragedy,” melodrama, but there are several possibilities (133). The editors of *Biographia Dramatica*, a contemporary encyclopedia, list no less than sixty types, from simply drama to “T. C. O. P. F.,” or “TragiComiOperatic Pastoral Farce.” Classifying Inchbald’s comedies, farces, and plays, Allardyce Nicoll also settles on an aggregate of terms: an “advanced style of sentimental humanitarian drama” (148).

Inchbald’s dramatic work unsettles English dramatic lexica owing to its European origins. In addition to sentimental comedy (*comédie larmoyante*), Inchbald draws on another genre that lies between tragedy and comedy, domestic or bourgeois drama. The term European drama here refers to this so-called *genre sérieux* that develops in eighteenth-century France and Germany. The drama of Storm and Stress (*Sturm und Drang*) such as Friedrich Schiller’s self-titled bourgeois tragedy *Intrigue and Love* (*Kabale und Liebe: ein bürgerliches Trauerspiel*) popularized romances that ended tragically. Inchbald only knew German drama through translation (as shown in *Lovers’ Vows*, adapted from a translation of Kotzebue’s *Child of Love* [*Das Kind der Liebe*]), but was fluent in French. Pre-romantic writer Louis-Sébastien Mercier (1740–1814) was a French voice of Storm and Stress. Mercier describes “le drame” in his long treatise *On Theater* (“Du théâtre, ou, Nouvel essai sur l’art dramatique,” 1773) as a tableau that accommodates a range of emotions:

What I want is not a statue on a pedestal; what I want is a group picture with various characters. I wish to see great masses, opposed tastes, mixed humors, and especially the consequences of contemporary manners. (393)

Denis Diderot wrote with more authority and eloquence on bourgeois drama than his student Mercier. However, Elizabeth Inchbald adapted two of Mercier’s plays, one of which, *Jean Hennuyer, of the Bishop of Lizieux*, became *The Massacre*.⁷

Perhaps because Inchbald, like Godwin, grew up on the fringes of Norwich in eastern-facing Suffolk, she looked to Continental Europe, particularly France, for dramatic inspiration. Inchbald started studying French in January 1774, read widely about its history, and lived in Paris for three months in 1776. French acquaintances in London included the actor, musician, pyrotechnic, and private theater manager Anthony A. Le Texier (1737–1814), who provided her with dramas to translate for Covent Garden manager Thomas Harris and published a collection of French plays in

the 1780s.⁸ Inchbald's role as translator entails more dramatic adaptation than translation. She adds or drastically changes characters, modifying manners to English tastes. This begs the question of why she spotlights the foreign origins of these adaptations. According to Jane Moody, Inchbald advertises her role as translator as "a strategic form of theatrical disguise" that allows her to explore taboo subjects through another author's name, without facing political backlash and censorship ("Suicide and Translation" 262). Another reason is that before 1833 and the Dramatic Copyright Act, authorship of dramas is less rigidly defined and more fluid than the modern concept of the playwright.⁹

An example of Inchbald's adaptation process is *Young Men and Old Women*, performed six times at Haymarket in June/July 1792 and, as far as I know, never again. The original manuscript title, *Lovers No Conjurors*, points to the comic conceit she borrows from Jean-Baptiste-Louis Gresset's (1709–1777) five-act comedy *Le Méchant* (1747), revived several times in 1790's Paris.¹⁰ *The Villain* conveys the title's semantic meaning in French. In competition for a young woman's affections, one young man convinces another to play the fop in order to avoid an arranged marriage. Gresset concludes his comedy by uncovering the ruse and banishing "the villain" (Cléon) responsible for organizing the deception. *Young Men and Old Women* ostensibly borrows this comic plotline but centers more on Inchbald's tragic creation, Mrs. Ambilogy. A widow who once lied to cover for her friend's romantic liaisons, Mrs. Ambilogy has spent the last ten years apologizing to her brother Sir Samuel Prejudice. "Brother, brother," she pleads, "it is cruel and unmanly of you thus continually to be reproaching me with the only circumstance in my life, that ever I was ashamed of" (*Young Men* 4–5). The suitors' ruse further ruins the reputation of Mrs. Ambilogy, because her testimony about Sylvan's excellent character (meaning no "foreign Fopperies about him") proves wrong (7). The farce ends on a tragic note. Sir Samuel banishes the middle-aged widow from their home forever, blaming Mrs. Ambilogy when he finds his daughter alone with her two suitors disguised as fortunetellers. However, Miss Prejudice must still wed her money-hungry suitor, "for in Woman there is no Perfection, till they are made Wives and Mothers" (25).

Mrs. Ambilogy is an ironic figure, because she undermines the illusion of nuptial resolution on which comic endings depend. She is also a prototype for another woman left without power or protection: Madame Tricastin in *The Massacre*. *Young Men and Old Women* tests the tragic boundaries of farce, prompting George Colman the Younger to write Inchbald:

You have often made people *laugh till they cry*, but your farce (which I have just perused) has made me quite *melancholy*: for, while you trifle so pleasantly in two acts, I feel it a serious loss of three that you don't afford me *five*. (qtd in Boaden 302)

A performance review from *The Oracle* is less favorable than Colman's praise but blames Mrs. Lydia Webb, the corpulent comic actress who plays Mrs. Anne Ambilogy, for the failure of the piece. Inchbald's publisher Robinson attended the first performance but decided not to publish the farce, perhaps owing to the inordinate amount of hissing the play received. Boaden does not specify which Robinson accompanies

Inchbald—George, Jr. (d. 1811), one of his brothers (John and James), or George Robinson, Sr. (1736–1801). In her recent biography on Inchbald, Annibel Jenkins suggests that the circle of friends and acquaintances around Godwin “would more properly be called the ‘Robinson circle’” (311). The *Dictionary of National Biography* attributes the fame of the Robinson family to their imprisonment after selling three copies of Thomas Paine’s *Rights of Man* in November 1793 and paying Anne Radcliffe £400 for *Mysteries of Udolpho* a year later. Through these publishers, Inchbald met Holcroft and Godwin, who read and critiqued *The Massacre*. 5

The advertisement announces that *The Massacre*, like Walpole’s *Mysterious Mother*, was “never intended for representation.” Regardless of the suitability of *The Massacre* for the stage, the failure of Inchbald to publish her play merits reexamination. Before the new season, the parsimonious author felt so secure about her livelihood as a paid writer that she declined an offer by Kemble to return to Drury Lane as an actress. The Robinsons printed but withdrew *The Massacre* from publication, and Godwin, who had edited parts of *A Simple Story*, undoubtedly influenced this decision. It is worth remembering that Godwin is also responsible for committing Mary Wollstonecraft’s only known play to the flames, a “sketch of a comedy, which turns, in the serious scenes, upon the incidents of her own story” (*Memoirs* 255).¹¹ He also dissuaded Amelia Alderson from pursuing her dramatic talents in London.¹² The motivation for these acts of censorship is unclear, but we do have Inchbald’s three-part response, dated November 24, 1792: “it was in your hinting to me that [*The Massacre*] might do harm,” she writes Godwin, “which gave me the first idea that it might do good” (qtd in Jenkins 317). Another reason to publish the play is financial. She “frequently obtained more pecuniary advantage by ten days’ labor in the dramatic way than at the labor” of a novel. The first part of the letter, addressed to “Sir,” points to another textual origin of *The Massacre*: 10 15 20 25

I feel anxious to exculpate myself in those points where I believe it is in you accuse me of trusting to newspapers for my authority. I have no other authority (no more, I believe, has half of England) for any occurrence which I do not see: it is by newspapers that I am told that the French are at present victorious; and I have doubt but you will allow that (in this particular, at least) they speak the truth. (qtd in Jenkins 316) 30

An avid newspaper reader, Inchbald must have seen the front page of *The Times* on September 8, 1792, which also announced the performance of *A Mogul Tale* at Haymarket. The headline resembles the title of her only tragedy: “Another Dreadful Massacre!” It was unusual for *The Times* to report any breaking news on the front page, a place generally reserved for advertising. 35

The August 10 and September Massacres, as they came to be known in the press, were the defining events of 1792. The dethroned king and his family were put in prison as criminals, and the counterrevolution—and England’s protracted war with France—began. Perhaps Godwin challenges the authority of the press for good reason. Eyewitness reports and letters fuel speculations that grow in the retelling. On August 15 and 16, *The Times* readers were told that a mob consisting of “30,000 men, women and children” attacked the king and queen at the palace and that 1500 died in the first slaughter 40

(2). A month later estimates reached eleven thousand dead (September 10, 1792, 1). Then came the September Massacres. In a parallel to Inchbald's play, mobs form mock tribunals, though rumors about children being "roasted alive" in front of the *Place Dauphin* are not likely true (*The Times* September 12, 1792, 2). Eusèbe Tricastin's horrific portrait—"I put out my arms to embrace my fellow sufferers, I found I clasped nothing but dead bodies"—dramatizes reports about bodies littering the streets of Paris (Inchbald 8). The shock of seeing women and children involved in the melee resembles Inchbald's portrait of the chaos. English observers write that "almost as many women as men" and even "children are employed in forming entrenchments round Paris" (September 10, 1792, 1; September 8, 1792, 2). In a triumph for Burkean rhetoric, the death of the Old Order gave way (in Britons' minds) to a perverse world in which women and children were not only victims but also perpetrators of violence. AQ2

Through footnotes, Inchbald veils these specific events and sets *The Massacre* in a town outside sixteenth-century Paris during the massacre of the Protestants, a curious choice for a Catholic writer. However, contemporaries saw a direct correlation between the August 10/September Massacres in 1792 and the massacre on the feast of St. Bartholomew, which took place 220 years earlier on August 24, 1572. Etymologically, the word massacre entered English from Old French following descriptions of St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre. The historical debate stemming from Jacques-August de Thou (1553–1617) concerns possible premeditation of the slaughter either on the part of the Church or rivalries at court like Catherine of Medici and the Duke of Guise.¹³ Christopher Marlowe first dramatized these events in *The Massacre at Paris* (1592). Marlowe blames the disaster on a Catholic cabal that deceives the French king. In a scene evocative of the conclusion of *The Massacre*, his play ends with the body of a friar being carried out. The massacre gained notoriety in Inchbald's time owing to Marie Joseph Chénier's *Charles IX: or the School for Kings* (*Charles IX ou l'école des rois*). Like Marlowe's play, *Charles IX* centers on key aristocratic and ecclesiastical players but finds fault with the monarchy as well. Staged regularly in Paris through 1792, *Charles IX* became infamous owing to its initial censorship and for the way the public demanded its first performance.¹⁴ For English audiences, the massacre of the Huguenots stood as an allegory for the need to temper fanaticism and formed a backdrop for the last time Paris saw mobs rule.

In 1772 Mercier rewrote this history as a bourgeois drama framed by sympathy for a misguided king and faith in a redeemable Church. Similar to British Romantic writers, Mercier returned again and again to late sixteenth-century history in order to make sense of the present.¹⁵ *Jean Hennuyer, Bishop of Lizieux* (*Jean Hennuyer, évêque de Lisieux*) was accidentally published under the name Voltaire, a mistake that favored this minor writer. *Jean Hennuyer, Bishop of Lizieux* was not performed until after Mercier's return from self-exile in Switzerland, twice in Caen in February and March 1791 and eight times in Paris at the Théâtre du Marais (September/October 1791). The subtitle of the English version (translated anonymously in 1773) points again to Britons' association of St. Bartholomew's Day with the term massacre: *Jean Hennuyer, Bishop of Lizieux, or, The Massacre of St. Bartholomew*. Adapting this literal translation into *The Massacre*, Inchbald eliminates its romantic subplot and changes the names of

the main protagonists.¹⁶ Madame Tricastin's counterpart in Mercier's play is Laura; her husband's cousin Suzanna is romantically tied to Laura's brother Evrard. In *Young Men and Old Women*, the conceit of a romance still frames the action, but perhaps writing that two-act farce provides lessons in the economy of writing. Inchbald extracts Laura, the brother-in-law Evrard, and Mercier's own frame narrative about Bishop Jean Hennuyer, savior of Protestants in Lizieux (100 miles northwest of Paris in Normandy), but preserves most of the literal translation. For example, similar to *The Massacre*, *Jean Hennuyer* opens with Laura waiting for her husband to return from her parental home in Paris and talking to her father-in-law, Arsenne, and a chorus of Protestants, who arrive and disclose that a massacre is afoot. When Arsenne, Jr. finally arrives, he is covered in his relations' blood and tells the same tale as Eusèbe: "The bloody weapon I bore in my hand, my hair standing on end, my clothes stained with blood and dust, made me to be looked upon as one of the assassins" (Mercier, *Jean Hennuyer* 31). As in Inchbald's *Massacre*, the father intercedes in his son's need for revenge and leads the family in prayer.

The plays differ in their resolutions. In the third act, Mercier's Protestants seek protection from the bishop, who delivers Glandève's lines to the Dugas-like figure of the King's Lieutenant: the "first precept" of the Gospel "is that of charity; and the second, an obligation to extend it even to our enemies" (*Jean Hennuyer* 64). Tragedy is also averted because the newlyweds Laura and Arsenne, Jr. have no children yet, and she accompanies her husband to the palace of the bishop. The point at which the plays make their respective comic and tragic turns is earlier, at the center of the drama. Before seeking the sanctuary of the bishop, Laura is allowed to defend herself in the fourth scene of Act 2:

ARSENNE jr., *arming himself, and every one imitating him*. To arms! To arms! Let us talk no more of flight. Let us sell our blood dearly.—But where shall I hide thee, my dear wife?—How shall I screen thee from their strokes?

LAURA *armed, standing near her Husband*. Well! I will shew myself equal to their furies. They shall see, how it is when a woman fights for him she loves.

EVRARD *armed*. I will defend you all to my last gasp. (*Jean Hennuyer* 39)

Mercier plays with the notion of women taking up arms, a not uncommon French motif before 1900.¹⁷ Though Laura never tests her prowess with the sword, *Jean Hennuyer* envisions a fictional universe in which women participate in public disputes (and are, by implication, free to roam outside domestic spaces). Inchbald's *Massacre* encloses Madame Tricastin, a gesture that traps her. The above scene plays out quite differently in *The Massacre*, leading to its tragedy: the death of Madame Tricastin and her children. Eusèbe's tragic flaw is that he misses three opportunities to save his young family. Madame Tricastin asks him three times to flee their house to a friendly country (presumably England), but her husband insists on staying to fight instead of "meanly flying" (*Massacre* 14). Second, Eusèbe refuses to arm his wife. For "so sacred do I hold the delicacy of her sex, that could she with a breath lay all our enemies dead, I would not have her feminine virtues violated by the act" (14–15). Here Inchbald summarizes the fear underlying English spectators of the French Revolution: that it reverses natural order and produces unsexed she-men (*femmes-hommes*), or what Adriana Craicun

calls British women writers' "fatal women." This fear proves absurd at the end of the play, since Madame Tricastin and her children die without any protection, and the way Inchbald adapts Mercier's text indicts Eusèbe's bravado for this tragic end.

Madame Tricastin is left with no "feminine virtues" or even a life to defend for a third reason: Eusèbe's protection of his father. Instead of staying to guard his unarmed wife and children, Eusèbe impersonates his father and denies the identity of his spouse, though Tricastin's heroics outdo his son's chivalry. Whereas Mercier's patriarch guides his Protestant tribe to safety, the dynamic between Eusèbe and his father is less compatible. Eusèbe and Tricastin compete for the role of the male rebel-lover; in the process, they unwittingly revise and satirize acting like a romantic hero. The elder Tricastin appears to be the most pathetic character in *The Massacre*. Mercier's patriarch admits to a lack of intimacy with his family: "I ... have lived whole years together without embracing even once either my wife or my son" (*Jean Hennuyer* 9). Inchbald translates this character trait as an inability to keep "promise[s]" and honor oaths, a tendency his son inherits (*Massacre* 2). In a September 2004 reading performance of *The Massacre* in Boulder, the actor playing Tricastin, professional thespian Steven Hayes-Pollard, commanded his part and the attention of the audience more than any other performer. This might lie in that modern actor's prowess or in the character actor Inchbald perhaps envisions for the role. She often wrote for John Quick (1748–1831), a supporting actor at Covent Garden who played old men such as Mr. Solus opposite Ms. Spinster in *Every One* and Silky in Holcroft's *A Road to Ruin*, which opened the 1792 Covent Garden season in September. Each of Quick's roles subject him to ridicule, contrasting his weakness with "basic goodness and strength of principles" (Backscheider xxvi). Inchbald was a fan and friend of Quick, visiting his benefit night and praising his performance as Item in Holcroft's *Deserted Daughter*: "no tragedian could have better expressed the perturbed state of a murderer's mind, than this comic actor described the violent passions which shook his frightened soul!" (Inchbald, "Remarks" 4). Above all, Quick's agitation was entertaining. When he played Richard III on his benefit night in April 1790, for example, the audience could not take him seriously and nicknamed him "Little Dicky" ("Quick" 221). The above examples illustrate a symmetry in Inchbald's tragic farces. In *Young Men and Old Women* and *The Massacre*, actresses take on the tragic roles, while roles for men tend to accommodate farcical characteristics to a greater degree.

In an age that increasingly privileges monodramas featuring big stars, Inchbald writes for an ensemble of characters that can display a full range of sentimental emotions. The full range of sentimental pity, as Ellis suggests, fits tragic and comic modes in equal measure.¹⁸ In tragic moments, pity accommodates remorse and sympathy; applied to romantic heroes, pity takes on satirical qualities and resembles the pathetic or ludicrous, though the audience never loses compassion with Inchbald's characters. This style contrasts with the singular focus of canonical Romantic writers such as Wordsworth and Coleridge, who conspicuously omit the figure of the mother. Inchbald does not write her maternal characters as Siddonesque leading ladies. This would undermine the collaborative ensemble work on which her plays depend. At the same time, she is careful to show the obstacles women such as Mrs. Ambigly, Madame

Tricastin, or Miss Wooburn in *Every One* face in simply surviving. In this tragic context, the hyperbolic threat of the French Revolutionary woman appears comical. If middle-aged women like Ambilogy, Tricastin, and Wooburn (alter egos of the then thirty-nine-year-old Inchbald) are dependent on men to protect them, then they stand to lose more than idealized gender characteristics. Similar to the recurring motif of suicide in Inchbald's dramas, the incidental deaths of women and children are clearly designated as acts of men, as opposed to cruel fate.

European drama offers the ideal place to negotiate such divisive issues. Inchbald is able to operate under the cover of translation and between the conventions of tragedy and comedy. Billed as a comedy, a main piece, and an original creation, *Every One* risked being denigrated as a hybrid to a greater degree than either *Young Men and Old Women* or *The Massacre*. In addition, concerns about mixing the tragic with the farcical mirror British anxiety about mixing up heteronormative roles. Across Europe after 1793, the Revolutionary woman became known as neither male nor female, and therefore an example of the grotesque. For instance, about Charlotte Corday, the Marquis de Sade states: "The barbarous assassin of Marat, similar to one of those composite creatures to whom one can assign no sex, vomited up by Hades for the unhappiness of both sexes, belongs solely to neither" (qtd in Corazzo and Montfort 39). In his 1799 poem "The Lay of the Bell" ("Das Lied von der Glocke") Friedrich Schiller describes French Revolutionary women as former wives and mothers who transform into "hyenas" and "commit atrocities for sport" ("Hyänen ... treiben mit Entsetzen Scherz") (l. 365–368).

At issue here is the status of public women, or women on display in public, an age-old charge leveled against prostitutes and actresses in equal measure. When Inchbald's characters expose the limitations of universal values like humanitarian protection, they work toward unveiling this tragedy as a farce. In Inchbald's dramatic plots, mothers and wives are legitimate targets for political wrath but do not share the same privileges as their male relatives. Citizenship, in other words, is implied as a state of revolutionary change; men can seek the protection of the law, whereas women, as passive citizens, exist in a space between that of foreigner and national. European drama also exists in an in-between place, between tragedy and comedy, and by the end of the nineteenth century emerges as its own genre. About that play announcing the birth of the New Woman, *A Doll's House* (*Et Dukkehjem*), Ibsen writes that it "is hardly a tragedy. It cannot be called pure comedy ... *The Doll's House* is tragicomic; it lies between tragedy and comedy; it is a *drame*" (qtd in Guthke 21). Not unlike *A Doll's House*, the dramas Inchbald finishes writing in 1792 are tragic retellings of romantic comedies. Eusèbe Tricastin and Torvald Helmer suffer from illusions of personal grandeur but ignore their wives' dire needs, reminding us that the romantic hero is, like Goethe's young Werther, farcical as well as tragic.¹⁹

Notes

- [1] In his introductory online essay about *The Massacre*, Daniel O'Quinn writes: "The title page of *The Massacre* states simply that the play is a tragedy of three acts taken from the French. As

far as I know there is no specific French source so the suggestion that the play is somehow a translation needs careful consideration” (3). This essay is also inspired by questions about the French source of *The Massacre* raised during discussions about the play at the 2004 NASSR conference at the University of Colorado, Boulder including Thomas Crochunis’s workshop; the Reading Performance directed by Andrea Garrett; the post-Performance panel discussion (D. O’Quinn, J. Carlson, T. Crochunis, C. Burroughs); and a paper by Michael Tomko.

[2] The prologue appears in unpaginated front matter in the text of the play. Subsequent references to plays by Inchbald and Mercier throughout this essay are given by page numbers to the editions cited in the reference list.

[3] Green notes that Reverend Robert Nares (1753–1829) visited Inchbald with the prologue on January 16, 1793, “leaving open the possibility that she participated” in its composition (52). Nares wrote *Principles of Government* (1792), a popular tract championing British liberty over French republicanism, making him an ideal voice to defend suspect comedies.

[4] In addition to her famous political tract, Olympe de Gouges (1748–93) produced a play at the Richelieu, *The Entry of Dumouriez into Brussels, or the Sutlers* (performed January 10, 23, and 25, 1793), that dramatized female soldiers taking up arms to defend the Republic. On British writers’ response to French Revolutionary women, see Adriana Craciun and Robin Ikegami. Dominique Godineau provides an authoritative introduction to Frenchwomen’s participation in the Revolution. These important works leave open the question of comparative perspectives on French Revolutionary women in European drama.

[5] For the political controversy about *Every One Has His Fault*, see Jenkins 316, 324; Moody *Illegitimate Theatre* 49; Moody “Suicide and Translation” 262; and O’Quinn in this issue.

[6] *Next Door Neighbors* premiered at Haymarket on July 9, 1791, continued as a main piece during that summer season, but was only performed twice (July 16 and August 18) in 1792. *The Hue and the Cry* (May 11 1791), produced on a benefit night at Drury Lane after years of trying to stage it, was unsuccessful (Jenkins 272). Older works fared better. *I’ll Tell You What* (1786) was a popular main piece during the summer season of 1792 (Haymarket July 4, 9, and 14). *The Mogul Tale* (1784), *The Midnight Hour* (1787), and *Animal Magnetism* (1788) were featured in the autumn of 1792 (respectively: September 5, 8, and 15 Haymarket; October 19 Covent Garden; and November 24 Covent Garden, as recorded in Schneider).

[7] On Diderot’s concept of bourgeois drama, see Burwick, 41–60. Compared to Diderot, Mercier is less theoretically sophisticated but more popularly known in European drama circles. Owing to his wide translation into German, Mercier is often credited with inspiring *Sturm und Drang* writers with their rebellion against Neoclassicism. On this subject, see Hill and Pusey.

[8] Included in this drama anthology is Mercier’s play, *The Pauper (L’Indigent)*, which Inchbald cites as a source for *Next Door Neighbours* (1791). Anthony A. Le Texier (1737–1814) left France in 1775 after offending Louis XV. In the 1780s and 1790s, the ex-patriot ran a private theater in Lisle Street (Boaden 270), where his one-man shows were staged in French. In addition to the Covent Garden connection, he and Inchbald share the acquaintance of Horace Walpole, who (via Madame du Deffand) introduced Le Texier into English society and in whose stage adaptation of *The Castle of Otranto*, *The Count Narbonne*, Inchbald had acted in Ireland. In 1792, this former friend of Garrick became “Gentleman in Ordinary” to the Margravine of Anspach (the former Lady Craven), for whom he staged private theatricals at Brandenburgh House, though he continued to act all the parts in sketches such as *Les Poissardes Angloises* in his private theater (February 15, 1793 *Morning Herald*, 1). In June of 1792, they were neighbors, since Inchbald moved to an unfurnished apartment in Leicester Fields. Le Texier visited Inchbald on occasion with his young daughter, and they worked on *The Hue and the Cry* together. What Le Texier thought of Inchbald’s dramatic work is unknown, though his *Ideas on the Opera, Offered to the Subscribers, Creditors, and Amateurs of that Theatre* criticized the “theatrical anarchy” of combining dance, song, and drama together (qtd in “Le Texier” 260). This did not stop him from fraternizing with dancers, one of whom, the Drury Lane dancer Mary Ross, he married.

AQ3

- [9] Elsewhere Moody questions why modern critics “privilege the authority of the dramatist whilst quietly ignoring those theatrical practices which might call into question an exclusive, proprietorial dramatic authorship” (“Illusions of Authorship” 101).
- [10] *Le Méchant* was performed fifteen times between 1792 and 1793 at three different Parisian theaters: Théâtre du Marais, Théâtre français de la rue de Richelieu, and Théâtre de la Nation. For exact performance data on *Le Méchant* and other eighteenth-century French plays, see the online *César* database. 5
- [11] Godwin claims to destroy this drama because it appears “to be in so crude and imperfect a state” that he judges “it most respectful to her memory to commit it to the flames” (*Memoirs* 255). In his notes, editor Richard Holmes ventures that Godwin does this to conceal Wollstonecraft’s former romances and because he potentially lacks her “sense of humor” (305n74). If this no longer extant play treated the comic and the tragic, it probably resembled 1790s sentimental comedy to a greater degree than modern definitions of (lowbrow) comedy. 10
- [12] Alderson desired a career in the theater as an actress or dramatist and asked Godwin and Holcroft for advice. Godwin’s response contains little enthusiasm: “your comedy has, in my opinion, no considerable merit” (qtd in St. Clair 149). As Gary Kelly notes in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, Alderson (later Opie, 1769–1853) wrote three plays: one based on Roman history; part of a Gothic drama; and a full tragedy, *Adelaide*, staged in Norwich January 4 and 6, 1791 in the private theater of Mr. Plumptre, with Alderson in a starring role and the Plumptre sisters playing in concert. As Moody documents (“Suicide and Translation”), Anne Plumptre published literal translations of Kotzebue’s German plays that were made available to Inchbald. 15
- [13] Thou claimed to be an eyewitness of the massacres, and his *Mémoires* were reprinted in Paris at the end of the eighteenth century. Edward Stephens translated *The History of the Bloody Massacres of the Protestants* in 1674. 20
- [14] For the production history of *Charles IX* in 1789, see Carlson 21–39; Cox 34, 172–176; and Friedland 260–269.
- [15] Mercier wrote another drama about the Huguenots and St. Bartholomew’s day, *La destruction de la Ligue, ou la réduction de Paris, pièce nationale en 4 actes* (1782). This recurring interest parallels British authors’ dramatizations of the period (e.g., P. B. Shelley’s *The Cenci*). The titles of some of Mercier’s other plays anticipate Romantic subjects: *Jane Grey*, *Jeanne d’Arc*, and *Marie Stuart*. Charles Kemble adapted Mercier’s *Le Déserteur* (1771) as *The Point of Honor* (Haymarket July 1800). 25
- [16] Dugas, part of the Protestant chorus in Mercier, becomes a Catholic villain in Inchbald’s text. The name Eusèbe does not appear in Mercier’s text but belongs to a fourth-century Christian martyr (as well as a locality in the Rhone-Alps and Quebec). Many thanks to Thomas Crochunis, who pointed out discrepancies between Boaden and Bakscheider’s texts, and Laura Ceia Minjares for translation assistance. 30
- [17] Marie Anne Fiquet Du Boccage (1710–1802) circulated her tragedy *Les Amazones* (1749) in Parisian salons. In the nineteenth century, the Athena-like Marianne, as Maurice Agulhon documents, became synonymous with the Republic on buildings, stamps, and in public pageants. 35
- [18] “In its simpler forms—pity for a fly, pity for a worm—sentimentality is merely ludicrous, but as it evolved in the eighteenth century to include pity for the poor wretches in debtors’ prisons, pity for chimney sweeps, and pity for negro slaves, sentimentality created one of the great advances in western civilization” (Ellis 7).
- [19] Resources afforded by the NEH Summer Seminar for College Teachers (dir. Stephen Behrendt, 2005) contributed to this essay. 40

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