

THE TEXTS OF SOUTHERNE'S *THE SPARTAN DAME*\*

Southerne began work on *The Spartan Dame* while a lieutenant in the Princess Anne's Regiment of Foot, one of the new regiments raised by James II at the time of Monmouth's rebellion. The dramatist was a staunch Tory and may even at that stage have intended his play, drawn from Plutarch's Life of Agis, as a mirror for the times. He was later to claim that he had been encouraged in its composition by his commander, that most martial of Jacobites the Duke of Berwick. Whether by accident, design, or surreptitious re-design, the tragedy presented a sufficiently close parallel to the situation *after* 1688 to keep it from the stage for a good thirty-two years.

During this period it would seem to have been thoroughly revised on at least two occasions. The following list indicates the known stages in its evolution up to the publication of a final and allegedly definitive text in 1721.

1. The version of 1687-8. According to Southerne's statement in the preface to the edition of 1719, this consisted of "near four Acts."
2. A version seen "five and twenty years" before *The Spartan Dame* finally reached the stage by Southerne's friend John Allen and presumably identical with the above. In 1719 Allen found the play "very different . . . from what it was then."<sup>1</sup>
3. A completed version in five acts prepared around 1704. Southerne speaks in the preface to the edition of 1719 of having removed certain "exceptionable Parts" from this version. It is

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\* A revised version of part of a paper read at the August Annual General Meeting.

not clear whether these were ever restored.  
(That is, whether it was the length of #5 or of #7.)

4. A pruned and cobbled version accepted for performance in 1719 after it had been cleared by William Congreve acting as agent for the Lord Chamberlain. Congreve's report states specifically that Southerne had read the play aloud to him.<sup>2</sup> There may easily have been more on paper than was allowed to reach his ear.

5. "The Original," a lost manuscript named as the source of a selection of the censored material which was restored by a contemporary to a copy of the edition of 1719 now in the Pforzheimer Library. The fact that several of these passages coherently link lines which are separated in the 1721 text by other lines suggests that we are dealing with an integral text intermediate in length between 1719 and 1721. There are also a number of striking verbal variations from the 1721 edition. Two passages in the printed text are marked by the annotator as not being present in the "Original." These have the appearance of being additions made during rehearsal in order to remove dramatic weaknesses, suggesting that the 1719 text may have been derived from the prompt-book, or from Southerne's manuscript after it had passed through the prompter's hands, rather than from an authorial fair-copy. The "Original" may have been identical with the 1704 text; however, it seems more likely to have been the acting text as first offered to the theatre in 1719.

6. The Drury Lane prompt-book. (This may simply have been Southerne's manuscript with additional markings.) The prompter, William Rufus Chetwood, was also the play's first publisher. If the edition of 1719 was derived from the prompt-book, there may also have been a separate press transcript, as the prompt-book would have been in use in the theatre during the period in which the play was being printed.<sup>3</sup>

7. The edition of 1719. There are four issues, the last two of which are described as "The Second Edition" and "The Third Edition." The only difference between these and the earlier issues is that they contain a higher proportion of corrected states. The

corrections, which are very numerous, do not appear to be authorial.

8. A Dublin edition of 1720. This is a faithful reproduction of 1719.

9. The edition of 1721. This was set up as part of the 1721 reprint of Southerne's collected plays, but also issued separately by Chetwood with re-set page numbers and signatures prior to its appearance in this form. The title-page of the separate edition describes it as "The FIFTH EDITION: With the Addition of the 400 Lines omitted in the Representation, and the former Editions," the extra lines being identified by preliminary quotation marks. This text agrees closely with 1719 with respect to the substantives of the dialogue, apart from a number of restorations and revisions which are clearly authorial. In the stage directions, however, there are many variants, a large proportion of which are indifferent. This gives added support to the notion that the 1719 text incorporates prompter's alterations, although it is clear that some at least of the variants are due to the regularizing tendencies of the 1721 compositor.

### *The Relationship of the Texts*

The two principal problems posed by the above outline concern the nature of the copy for the editions of 1719 and 1721. As far as the earlier edition is concerned, the question is whether it was set from an author's manuscript or a prompter's transcript—or alternatively from an author's manuscript marked up by a prompter. A number of textual features listed under #5, #6, and #7 above would seem to point to the latter possibilities, as does the circumstantial detail that prompter and publisher were one and the same person. A piece of evidence particularly favouring the second possibility is the incorrect lineation of many of the verse passages in the 1719 edition, although this will have owed something to the damage done to Southerne's metre by over-enthusiastic verbal censorship.

A more serious problem is posed by the 1721 edition: was it set from a marked-up copy of 1719,

similar in appearance to the Pforzheimer copy mentioned in #5 above, or from an independent manuscript? Clear resolution is made difficult by the house-style imposed by the shop (that of John Watts) which printed the 1721 text, a style so disciplined as to allow very little to be gleaned of the accidentals of underlying copy. Luckily, in the course of a series of tests conducted with the invaluable assistance of Mrs Maureen Mann, it was possible to show that 1721 was in close agreement with 1719 in the distribution of variant spellings of the same word. Leaving aside grammatical function words—among which there is also, however, a tendency towards correspondence—we find there are eight such doublets in the 1719 edition and one triplet (*busy/busie, entreat/intreat, farewell/farewell, harden'd/hardned, persuade/perswade, remember'd/remembred, sexe's/sex's/sexes, toil/toyl, villainy/villány*), with a total of twenty-six local occurrences, of which twenty-two recur in the same form in the 1721 edition. Given the generally high-handed attitude towards accidentals of copy displayed by Watts's compositors, this is a strong argument in favour of direct descent.

The one piece of evidence which seems at odds with the hypothesis is the heavy concentration of substantive variants in the stage directions, many of these changes being so trivial that it is hard to see why Southerne would have bothered to make them. One possible explanation, already advanced, is that the directions were partially rewritten by the 1721 compositor (or compositors) in order to make them consistent with other plays in the edition. Conversely, the changes could derive from some peculiarity of copy which cannot now be recovered—e.g., that it was a lost "fourth edition," that it was a paste-up using the dialogue sections only of the 1719 text, or that the compositor had a manuscript as well as a marked-up copy of the earlier edition and for some reason (although it is hard to imagine one) was taking the directions from the former.

However, the alternative possibility, that the spelling correspondences were present in a common ancestor, cannot be dismissed out of hand. My colleague David Bradley has suggested that the theatre could have been in possession of Southerne's complete manuscript marked with cuts (that is, with two or

even three distinct texts co-existing in the one physical record) and that this, with perhaps one intervening transcript as proposed in #6, could have served as the immediate source for both printed texts. A way in which this could have happened was for Southerne, once the play had been cleared by Congreve, to have given Chetwood his full manuscript from which to prepare a prompt-book and a separate press copy. Southerne would then have reclaimed the manuscript for use at rehearsals which, in accordance with Drury Lane practice at the time, he would have supervised personally on at least three occasions. As the play evolved in rehearsal, Chetwood and Southerne would have made additions and alterations to their respective books but without necessarily copying directly from each other—it is easy to imagine how prompter and author might have marked down stage directions in slightly different words. After this, it is only necessary to suppose that Chetwood transferred the alterations in the prompt copy to the press copy, which then became the edition of 1719, and that Southerne's long manuscript with further revisions became the edition of 1721, to yield us a scheme that both fulfils the requirement of close proximity—as established by the spelling variants—and gives a plausible rationale for the differences in the wording of the stage directions.

A drawback to this scheme is that it can hardly admit of a separate manuscript intermediate in length between 1719 and 1721, such as I have supposed the "Original" to be. (It is, of course, possible that such a manuscript existed but played no part in the line of descent under consideration.) A more serious objection is that it does not allow for the sheer weight of revision Southerne's text underwent during the processes of censorship, cobbling, de-censorship, de-cobbling, and polishing.<sup>4</sup> If at this stage in my investigation I still prefer the hypothesis of direct descent, it is because of a feeling (and one which I offer as nothing more than a feeling) that any visionary scheme sufficient to provide the 1721 compositors with usable manuscript copy would also have to interpose at least four transcriptions between the reader of the 1719 edition and the reader of the

1721 edition, and that this is not reconcilable with the close textual relationship indicated by the correspondence of the two texts in the distribution of variant spellings.

*Notes*

<sup>1</sup>John Duncombe, ed., *Letters, by Several Eminent Persons Deceased* (London, 1772), I, 172 n.

<sup>2</sup>BM MS Add. 32685 f.49-49<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>3</sup>The play opened on Friday, 11 December. The first edition appeared on Friday, 18 December. (*Daily Post*.) The printer was William Wilkins.

<sup>4</sup>A full list of these variants will be available in the second volume of the edition of Southerne's *Works* being prepared by the present author and R. J. Jordan for the Clarendon Press.

H. H. R. Love

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