

Mending What Fletcher Wrote: Rochester's Reworking of Fletcher's *Valentinian*

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Witt! sacred Witt, is all the buis'ness here,
Great *Fletcher!* and the Greater *Rochester!*
Now name the hardy Man one fault dares find,
In the vast work of two such *Heroe's* join'd.
None but Young *Strephon's* soft and powerfull Wit,
Durst undertake to mend what *Fletcher* writ.
Different his Heav'nly Muse, yet both agree,
To make an everlasting Harmony.

([Aphra Behn], *Prologue. Spoken by Mrs. Cook* [London, ?1683], sig. A1^r)

Fletcher's *The Tragedie of Valentinian* (probably written in 1613 or 1614) was not published until 1647¹ and Rochester's reworking of it survives in two different versions. The earlier and fuller version, entitled *Lucina's Rape Or The Tragedy of Vallentinian*, is found in three contemporary manuscripts (British Library Add. MS 28692, Folger Shakespeare Library MS V b 233 and Yale Osborn MS Osborn b 334—the "Hartwell MS"), each of which appears to be derived from the same manuscript original. The second version, in the quarto edition dated 1685 which marks its first appearance in print, bears the title *Valentinian: A Tragedy. As 'tis Alter'd by the late Earl of Rochester, And Acted at the Theatre-Royal. Together with a Preface concerning the Author and his Writings. By one of his Friends.*² This text was taken from a prompt copy of *Lucina's Rape*, and reveals that Rochester's reworking itself had been further "Alter'd" to the extent of having scenes reordered and lines removed; the quarto was published by Henry Herringman and Timothy Goodwin with a variant title-page bearing their individual imprint.³ Rochester's revision of

¹ For the date of Fletcher's play, which the cast list published in the Second Folio (1679) confines to the period 1610–14, see Philip J. Finkelpearl, *Court and Country Politics in the Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 213; and *The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon*, ed. Fredson Bowers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 4: 263. It was first published in *Comedies and Tragedies Written by Francis Beaumont And Iohn Fletcher Gentleman. Never printed before, And now published by the Authors Originall Copies* (London, 1647) and this is the edition that Rochester used.

² Lucyle Hook argues that, despite being dated 1685, the quarto edition was in print before 6 December 1684 (see "The Publication Date of Rochester's *Valentinian*," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 39 (1956): 401–7). Unless otherwise stated, in this essay "*Valentinian*" will refer to Fletcher's play and "*Lucina's Rape*" to Rochester's version.

³ The quarto printing reverses 2.1 and 2.2, and 3.1 and 3.2, and cuts 86 lines, including 53 by Rochester (see Larry Carver, "Rochester's *Valentinian*," *Restoration and 18th Century Theatre Research*, 2nd ser., 4, no. 1 (1989): 25–38, see p. 31). Although the tiny proportion of surviving copies that bear Herringman's imprint forms too small a sample to allow certainty, it is probable that, firstly, he had

Fletcher's play should properly be referred to by the title he clearly assigned to it, *Lucina's Rape*, but, whether in manuscript or print, the work has been largely ignored by scholars.

J. Harold Wilson observed in December 1937 that, with one notable exception, Rochester's "alteration of Fletcher's *Valentinian* [...] has received comparatively little serious study" and identified A. C. Sprague's survey published a few years earlier as being "the only study pretending to completeness."⁴ History has repeated itself during the intervening seventy years, for notwithstanding Larry Carver's important championing of the British Library manuscript copy as the version that most closely reflects Rochester's intentions (see note 3), "serious study" of the play since Sprague has been undertaken by just one remarkable scholar: Harold Love. Love made three notable contributions: in his definitive Rochester edition⁵ he provided readers for the first time with a collated text of *Lucina's Rape* and a full critical apparatus revealing the precise changes Rochester made to Fletcher's original. This was supplemented by two typically perceptive papers: "Was Lucina Betrayed at Whitehall?" in which he argued that Rochester "makes the palace of Valentinian subtly suggestive of the palace of Whitehall,"⁶ and "The Rapes of Lucina,"⁷ which detailed the relationship of Fletcher's and Rochester's dramas to their sources. This present essay will build on the firm scholarly platform provided by Love to contend that a re-appraisal of *Lucina's Rape* is long overdue.



Despite the modern interest in Rochester's work that David Vieth fostered with his edition of the poems in 1968 and Jeremy Treglown encouraged further with his edition of the letters twelve years later,⁸ *Lucina's Rape* has continued to be almost

only a minority financial interest in the edition and, secondly, that the copies he published were drawn off first. This latter conclusion is based on the extent of the type dislocation on page 5: in the copies bearing his imprint, only two lines are affected ("And when th' Emperor pleases to afford / Time from his pleasures, to take the care of those," lines 13–14), but the copies bearing Goodwin's imprint show the dislocation progressively extending through the next two lines also ("I am his Slave, and have a Sword and Life / Still ready for his Service"). The present writer is currently preparing a bibliography of the printed editions of Rochester's work for publication by The British Library / Oak Knoll Press.

⁴ J. Harold Wilson, "Rochester's *Valentinian* and Heroic Sentiment," *Journal of English Literary History* 4 (1937): 265. See also Arthur Colby Sprague, *Beaumont and Fletcher on the Restoration Stage* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1926), 165–78.

⁵ *The Works of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester*, ed. Harold Love (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). Quotations are from this edition unless otherwise stated.

⁶ *That Second Bottle: Essays on John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester*, ed. Nicholas Fisher (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000), 190.

⁷ *Print, Manuscript, & Performance: The Changing Relations of the Media in Early Modern England*, ed. Arthur F. Marotti and Michael D. Bristol (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2000), 200–14.

⁸ *The Complete Poems of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester*, ed. David M. Vieth (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1968); *The Letters of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester*, ed. Jeremy Treglown (Oxford:

entirely disregarded by scholars. Uncertainty concerning when the play was written and given its first performance, coupled with Rochester's selection of one of Fletcher's least known dramatic works, will have played a part in this.

To deal first with the question of the play's staging: its first recorded performance, under the name *Valentinian*, was at the Hall Theatre within Whitehall Palace on 11 February 1684, nearly four years after Rochester's death. It would have been highly unusual for a première to take place at Court, and it is likely that the United Company gave a performance or series of performances a few weeks earlier, probably on a Saturday in December 1683 or January 1684 after a month's rehearsal, in the public theatre in Drury Lane (as indicated on the title-page of the quarto edition).⁹ The quarto text includes three prologues: one "spoken by Mrs. Cook the first Day" (which slightly revises and improves the broadside publication of that prologue and the epilogue¹⁰); another one "Spoken by Mrs. Cook the second Day"; and a third "Prologue intended for *Valentinian*, to be spoken by Mrs. Barrey," the word "intended" introducing an ambiguity as to whether the run actually lasted long enough to achieve posthumously the usual third-performance benefit for the author (sigs. c2^r-4^r).¹¹

The three manuscript copies of *Lucina's Rape*, however, contain casting details that imply actual or intended performance during Rochester's lifetime, specifically for a period between 1670 and 1676. Reviewing the evidence, Love indicates that if the play had been performed by the actors indicated, it could only have been after Thomas Clarke (Lycias) joined the Company during the 1670-71 season, and before the autumn of 1676, when Elizabeth Cox (Claudia) left the King's Company. Love endorses the contention by Judith Milhous and Robert Hume that the performance or intended performance took place "ca. 1675-76" but favours an earlier rather than a later date; he argues that by 1676 the actress Elizabeth Boutell, having created the important role of Melantha in Dryden's *Marriage à-la-Mode* during the 1671-72 season, and then the major role of Margery Pinchwife in Wycherley's *The Country Wife* in January 1675, had become one of the Company's leading actors by 1676 with a status and commensurate salary that would have rendered her ineligible for the less prestigious role of Lucina's attendant Marcellina.¹² There is no evidence, though, that Mrs Boutell was so status-conscious as to be unwilling to take a minor role in

Oxford University Press, 1980).

⁹ See *The London Stage, 1660-1800*, part 1, 1660-1700, ed. William van Lennep (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1965), 325; Tiffany Stern, *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 145, 188.

¹⁰ The undated broadside is entitled "Prologue. Spoken by Mrs. Cook," and in the extract that forms the epigraph to this essay, "Strephon" is now described as "Great," and "Different his Heav'nly Muse" is changed to "Different their heav'nly Notes."

¹¹ Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume, *Producible Interpretation: Eight English Plays 1675-1707* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985), 46.

¹² Love, *Works*, 449; John Downes, *Roscious Anglicanus*, ed. Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume (London: Society for Theatre Research, 1987), 83.

a play penned by one of the leading members of the Court; it is perhaps more significant that in May 1675 she created the part of Bellinganna in Fane's *Love in the Dark*, a play with which Rochester would have been familiar as he contributed its epilogue (and also, according to the author, some of its content¹³). It is not beyond belief that even though by this time Mrs Boutell had been on the stage for some fifteen years, Rochester would have been able to secure her participation (or at least would have anticipated being able to do so); Crowne, for example, congratulated himself in the preface to *Calisto* on the success of his choice of Mrs Davis to play the River Thames.¹⁴ On this basis, a date late in 1676 for the first performance or intended performance of Rochester's play cannot be discounted, and it is worth stressing that, with records existing for between just 7 per cent and 13 per cent of all theatrical performances during the later seventeenth century, the lack of documentary evidence (as is the case with the public performances of *Lucina's Rape* in late 1683 or early 1684) does not fatally undermine the thesis.¹⁵

Although *Love* discounts a performance of *Lucina's Rape* during Rochester's lifetime, two factors nonetheless support the probability. Firstly, as Love points out, "Whatever Rochester's subsequent thoughts, there is no indication in the manuscripts that *L[ucina's] R[ape]* was not regarded as a finished work at the time of its completion and scribal publication."¹⁶ All the evidence concerning Rochester's habits suggests that he released his poems only when he was satisfied with them, even in the case of "To A Lady, in A Letter," which exists in three versions. Vieth has perceptively concluded that the list of modifications to this poem

reveals very few instances in which Rochester altered a reading, then returned later to his original thought. Evidently he possessed rare facility in finding exactly the words he wanted to body forth his conceptions.¹⁷

Secondly, given Rochester's apparent satisfaction with his alterations to Fletcher's "purple-robed *Tragedy*,"¹⁸ in that he permitted his version to go to a professional

¹³ In the dedication to the play, Fane writes, "If this receives any approbation in the World, I must ascribe it principally to Your Lordship's particular recommendations, and impartial corrections" (sig. A2^r).

¹⁴ "[T]he graceful motions and admirable singing of Mrs. Davis, did sufficiently prove the discretion of my choice," "To the Reader," sig. A3^r. See also Milhous and Hume, *Producible Interpretation*, 48.

¹⁵ Allardyce Nicoll and Montague Summers both argue for lifetime performance (in, respectively, "Dryden, Howard and Rochester," *Times Literary Supplement*, 13 January 1921, 27 and *The Playhouse of Pepys* (London: Kegan Paul & Co., 1935), 330). See also Robert D. Hume, "The Aims and Limits of Historical Scholarship," *Review of English Studies*, n.s., 53 (2002): 409. I am most grateful to Professor Hume for privately guiding me through the minefield of inadequate, inaccurate and misleading records of performances of Rochester's play.

¹⁶ Love, *Works*, 621.

¹⁷ David M. Vieth, "A Textual Paradox: Rochester's 'To a Lady in a Letter,'" *PBSA* 54 (1960): 159.

¹⁸ Richard Lovelace, "To Fletcher reviv'd" (line 19), from *Lucasta (The Poems of Richard Lovelace)*, ed. C. H. Wilkinson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930), 60).

scribe for copying (a necessary step on the way to having the play performed), it is more credible that only in the light of stage performance would Rochester have recognised the need for the play to be “alter'd and corrected” to the extent indicated by Wolseley (see below). The series of alterations to *Lucina's Rape* made after Rochester's death for the public performances in 1683 or 1684, which include cutting lines and changing the order of scenes, are redolent of the “considerable amount of revising and fixing [that normally] must have gone on during rehearsals and occasionally afterwards.”¹⁹ Rochester would have had the opportunity to observe such a process at first hand (in fact he probably would have been hard pressed to avoid being a witness) during the “innumerable Rehearsals” of John Crowne's court masque *Calisto* that took place in the Hall Theatre between September 1674 and its première on 15 or 16 February 1675.²⁰ The planned improvements to which Wolseley alludes, however, amount to a major revision that makes most sense in terms of being a response to a combination of director, player and audience reaction to a staged performance (in a not dissimilar vein to the composer Dmitri Shostakovich giving his fifth symphony the subtitle “A Soviet artist's reply to just criticism”).

The logical inference that accompanies a date of “ca. 1675–76” for the première of *Lucina's Rape* is that the play was written shortly beforehand. Prior to his training of Elizabeth Barry around this time, Rochester had probably introduced to the King's Company in 1667 Sarah Cooke, “the prettiest, but also the worst actress in the realm,”²¹ and his continuing interest in the theatre is evidenced, for example, by his supply of the prologue for Elkanah Settle's *The Empress of Morocco* in spring 1673 and, as already noted, the epilogue for Fane's *Love in the Dark*, together with his influence in the commissioning of Crowne to write the court masque against the more obvious claims of Dryden as poet laureate.²² He had also been the dedicatee of Crowne's *The History of Charles VIII of France* (1672), Dryden's *Marriage à-la-Mode* (1673) and Nathaniel Lee's *Nero* (1675). Gilbert Burnet records that Rochester “would often go into the Country, and be for some months wholly imployed in Study, or the Sallies of his Wit”; and Rochester, in a letter from Oxfordshire to his friend Harry Savile in London, observes that it is only in the country “one can think, for you att Court thinke not att all or att least as if you were shut up in a Drumme, you can thinke of nothing but the noise is made about you.” And in terms of Rochester having the extended leisure in the country necessary to write his play, the most obvious period would have been from early summer 1675, when he was in disgrace after drunkenly assisting in the destruction of the king's costly chronometer

¹⁹ Milhous and Hume, *Producible Interpretation*, 44.

²⁰ Crowne indicates that the number was a luxurious “twenty or thirty or so rehearsals” (*Calisto, or The Chaste Nymph* (London, 1675), sig. a1^r). See *The London Stage 1660–1800*, 1:222, 226, 228–29.

²¹ See the entries for the actresses in Philip H. Highfill et al., *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers, and Other Stage Personnel in London, 1660–1800*, 16 vols. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973–93), vols. 1, 3.

²² Love, *Works*, 405.

in the Privy Garden at Whitehall on 25 June, up until his return to London in May or June in 1676.²³

And, thirdly, why did Rochester select one of Fletcher's least-known plays for revision? Within the fashion for reworking for Restoration taste the plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, Fletcher was in reality an obvious choice, and at least 39 (possibly 42) of his plays were performed between 1660 and 1700. *The Wild Goose Chase*, *Philaster*, *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife*, *A King and No King* and *The Humorous Lieutenant* were "great favourites and appeared year after year," while another, *Rollo Duke of Normandy; Or, The Bloody Brother*, from which Rochester quotes in July 1678 in a letter to Harry Savile, was performed a half-dozen times between 1660 and 1675, Pepys being present on two occasions.²⁴ *Valentinian*, on the other hand, was far from achieving the popularity of such obvious favourites, but even though evidence of performances from the time of its composition to the end of the Restoration period is lacking, as E. H. C. Oliphant observes,

Valentinian may fall far behind the great tragedies of Shakespeare and Webster and Middleton; but it is a noteworthy thing for all that.²⁵

What obviously appealed to Rochester was the basis for a satiric portrait of Charles II provided by the portrayal of the Emperor as "a debauched monster with no redeeming features."²⁶ Rochester's relationship with the king seems always to have been fragile, with the poet veering between seeing him as a father figure to respect and a fallen human being to despise; there is a consistency in his criticism of Charles for being too much influenced by his mistresses, memorably expressed in his couplet "His Scepter, and's Pricke are boeth of one Length,/ And she may sway the one, who plays with th'other."²⁷ Strong motives for an implicit attack on the king can be seen to exist both in the contemporary political situation and in his friendship with the Duke of Buckingham. David Ogg has suggested that a "Country party," which within a decade would become formalised as the Whig Party, had begun to take shape during the autumn parliamentary session of 1673 as a group opposed to the anti-Tolerantist policies of the king's chief minister, the Earl of Danby (sub-

²³ Gilbert Burnet, *Some Passages of the Life and Death Of the Right Honourable John Earl of Rochester, Who died the 26th of July, 1680* (London, 1680), 25; Treglown, *Letters*, 93, 106–15, 121, 124. Love sees that summer as "offering leisure for the preparation of a finished transcript" (*Works*, 450).

²⁴ See *The London Stage 1660–1800*, 1: cxxviii and *passim*; Treglown, *Letters*, 210–13; *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, ed. Robert Latham and William Matthews, 11 vols. (London: Bell and Hyman, 1970–83), entries for 17 April 1667 (vol. 8) and 17 September 1668 (vol. 9).

²⁵ E. H. C. Oliphant, *The Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher: An Attempt to Determine their Respective Shares and the Shares of Others* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1927), 146–47. See also Finkelppearl, *Court and Country Politics*, 213, n. 4.

²⁶ Finkelppearl, *Court and Country Politics*, 213.

²⁷ Love distinguishes six texts, which he groups A to F. The text is taken from the C-Group text, lines 11–12.

sequently the alliance of those loyal to the Crown and the Anglican Church would become the Tory Party).²⁸ When, early in 1674, Buckingham was dismissed by the king from most of his posts, he naturally gravitated to a group implicitly opposed to the Crown; by 1675 he had joined the Marquis of Halifax and the Earl of Shaftesbury as the leaders of this opposition to the Crown's policies. At the time, too, there was a bi-polar grouping of literary taste which comprised, around Rochester, wits and poets such as Buckingham, Dorset and Sedley and, around Dryden, the Earl of Mulgrave and Sir Carr Scroop, which broadly reflected the nascent political grouping. In his choice of *Valentinian*, and his care to portray Charles II within his depiction of the Emperor, Rochester allied himself with Buckingham's political position while at the same time paying him a literary compliment by following his example of revising a play by Fletcher (Buckingham's adaptation of Fletcher's *The Chances* had been performed by the King's Company in 1667). It is significant that the only major poem Rochester seems to have written in the months following the episode in the Privy Garden was the satire "An Allusion to Horace," which, although chiefly directed at Dryden, also includes a swipe at Mulgrave, his "foolish Patron" (line 3).²⁹



The major disincentive to studying the play, however, lies in the assertion by Robert Wolseley in the Preface to the quarto edition that the accompanying text forms only an incomplete, uncorrected work in progress with which Rochester himself had been dissatisfied. Amid what Anthony à Wood described as "high flown surfeiting Encomiums" and a more recent commentator as "outrageous flattery,"³⁰ Wolseley emphasises in his opening words that the reader should "remember, that he looks upon an unfinish'd Piece," for

²⁸ David Ogg, *England in the Reign of Charles II*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), 2:526.

²⁹ David M. Vieth, *Attribution in Restoration Poetry: A Study of Rochester's Poems of 1680* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1963), 138. In a stimulating, but hitherto unpublished, critique of *Lucina's Rape*, Larry Carver argues that the Dryden-Rochester conflict provided the impetus for Rochester's selection of Fletcher for his choice of playwright. He suggests, for example, that Dryden's *Defence of the Epilogue*, in which he took Fletcher to task for superfluity of material and incorrect language (which Rochester and others viewed as hypocritical), may have led to Rochester's decision to work on a play by Fletcher; in particular he argues that Rochester's "Allusion to Horace" provides his manifesto on heroic drama, with *Lucina's Rape* being intended as the exemplary play itself. Significantly, Dryden dedicated his play *Aureng-Zebe* to Mulgrave in November 1675, doubtless much to the disgust of his former patron Rochester. For a chronology of Rochester's poems, see Nicholas Fisher, "Manuscript Miscellanies and the Rochester Canon," *English Manuscript Studies 1100-1700* 13 (2006): 285-92.

³⁰ Anthony à Wood, *Athenæ Oxonienses*, vol. 2 (Oxford, 1692), col. 490; *The Works of Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher*, Variorum edition, vol. 3 ed. Robert Grant Martin (London: Bell, 1908), 212.

my late Lord *Rochester* intended to have alter'd and corrected this Play much more than it is, before it had come abroad, and to have mended not only those Scenes of *Fletcher* which remain, but his own too, and the Model of the Plot itself . . .

(Rochester, *Valentinian: A Tragedy*, sig. A2^r, italics reversed)

And a potential further discouragement resides in an underlying nervousness on the part of the reader about the possibility of discerning Rochester's "soft and powerful Wit" separately within the "everlasting Harmony" that Behn describes Fletcher and Rochester as having together achieved; Fletcher's harmonious and seamless collaborations with Beaumont, Massinger and Shakespeare were well known. Again Wolseley fosters anxiety:

my Lord in the suiting of his Style to that of *Fletcher*, (which he here seems to have endeavour'd, that the Play might look more of a Piece) cannot with any justice be deny'd the Glory of having reach'd his most admir'd Heights, and to have match'd him in his Fancy, which was his chief Excellence.

(Rochester, *Valentinian: A Tragedy*, sig. A2^v, italics reversed)

Any fear, however, that *Lucina's Rape* might be merely a pale imitation of Fletcher's creative ability is more apparent than real. While it cannot be denied that the underlying genius of the play is Fletcher's, Rochester himself offers a perspective on the extent to which the "Rochester" in *Lucina's Rape* is a genuine reflection of his own genius as opposed to being a pastiche "Fletcher," when, in his *Alexander Bendo's Brochure*, he argues:

... if I appear to any one like a Counterfeit, even for the sake of that chiefly ought I to be construed a true man, who is the Counterfeits example, his original, and that which he imployes his industry and pains to imitate and copy.³¹

In other words, as applied to *Lucina's Rape*, even though Rochester may be seeking to "imitate and copy" the style of the Jacobean playwright, his own originality can be perceived in the "industry and pains" with which he does so. As even the limited attention given to *Lucina's Rape* (mainly based on the quarto text) makes abundantly clear, Rochester's originality extends well beyond straightforward imitation and replication.

With the exception of Love's work, the focus hitherto has tended to concentrate either on the structural changes Rochester made to *The Tragedie of Valentinian* or on his satire of Charles II in the portrait of Valentinian.³² Wolseley himself praised

³¹ Love, *Works*, 113.

³² See, for example, Sprague, *Beaumont and Fletcher on the Restoration Stage*, 167; Johannes Prinz, *John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester: His Life and Writings* (Leipzig, 1927), 161; Summers, *The Playhouse of Pepys*, 291–92; J. H. Wilson, "Satiric Elements in Rochester's *Valentinian*," *Philological Quarterly* 16 (1937): 41–48 and "Rochester's *Valentinian* and Heroic Sentiment," 265; Dustin Griffin, *Satires*

Rochester for enhancing the “*Unity of Action, and ... the whole conduct of the Plot*” (sig. A2^v), a view echoed by all modern critics, none more generously than Wilson, who adjudged the changes to have resulted in “a play which, it must be admitted, is better than the original, a statement which can be made about very few Restoration adaptations of older dramas.”³³ And although Rochester retains the chilling exchange that immediately follows *Valentinian*’s rape of *Lucina*—

Emp: Your only vertue now is Patience.
Bee wise and save your Honour, if you talk—
Lucina: As long as there is life in this Body
And breath to give me words I’le cry for Justice.
Emp: Justice will never hear you, I am Justice.
(*Lucina’s Rape*, 4.4.1–5)

—the Emperor he portrays, torn between desire and responsibility, is more credibly human than Fletcher’s tyrant. Rochester’s *Valentinian* may indeed be an “Abandoned voluptuary, ignoring imperial responsibilities for sexual dalliance,”³⁴ but he is also endowed with a “Gentle temper which inclines/ His minde to softness” (1.1.91–92), and his grief at the death of his lover *Lycias* (5.5.57–69) reveals an authentic tenderness. The hints that the action in the play is taking place at Whitehall (and the rape in Rochester’s own quarters there!), the addition of genuine pathos (*pace* Sprague) to the characterisation of *Lucina*, and the surprisingly subdued ending to the play reveal a dramatic fluency that is independent of Fletcher.

Rochester’s revisions have been helpfully summarised by Larry Carver:

By eliminating act V of the original; cutting three scenes, III,ii and iii, and IV,ii; adding two of his own, V[i] and v; adding 245 lines to I,i, 75 lines to II,i, 77 lines to III,ii, and 219 lines [to] III,iii, and by substantially rewriting IV,i and ii and V,ii,

against Man: The Poems of Rochester (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 288–89; Anne Righter, “John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester,” in *John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester: Critical Essays*, ed. David M. Vieth (New York: Garland, 1988), 14; Carver, “Rochester’s *Valentinian*,” 25; Warren Chernaik, *Sexual Freedom in Restoration Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 60–61 and “Sex, Tyranny and the Problem of Allegiance: Political Drama during the Restoration,” in *Theatre and Culture 1650–1757: “Leviathan” to Licensing Act*, ed. Catie Gill (Farnham: Ashgate, forthcoming). For evidence that the earlier narrow focus is now expanding to include examination of the play’s political and libertine background, see, for example, Richard Braverman, *Plots & Counterplots: Sexual Politics and the Body Politic in English Literature, 1660–1730* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 158–60; Kirk Combe, *A Martyr for Sin: Rochester’s Critique of Polity, Sexuality, and Society* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1998), esp. 110–39; and Jeremy W. Webster, *Performing Libertinism in Charles II’s Court: Politics, Drama, Sexuality* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 100, 140–41, 156–69.

³³ J. H. Wilson, *The Influence of Beaumont and Fletcher on Restoration Drama* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1928), 45. As an example of an unsuccessful re-writing, Nahum Tate’s *The History of King Lear* of 1681, with its contrived happy ending, takes some beating.

³⁴ Chernaik, *Sexual Freedom*, 61.

Rochester moved Fletcher's Jacobean melange of rant, poisonings and rape in the direction of neoclassical unity. He sought to unify the plot further by cutting the role of Eudoxia, the Emperor's wife, the parts of Afranius, Paulus, and Licippus, and the tangentially related machinations of these three. With an eye to satire, Rochester enhanced the part of the eunuch, Lycias, and emphasized the seamy side of court intrigue. In addition, he gave Valentinian and Maximus considerable psychological depth. Maximus is no longer a flat Machiavellian villain, but a patriot tormented by conflicting loyalties and metaphysical questions. Evidently meant to be a satirical portrait of Charles II, Valentinian becomes a complex study of duty at war with lust.³⁵

Most tellingly, however, Carver adds that Rochester's revisions result in his poetic *œuvre* being increased by "some 1300 lines," which is the equivalent of five poems each of the length of "A Letter from Artemiza in the Towne to Chloe in the Country." The quality of Rochester's efforts to "mend what *Fletcher* writ" can be demonstrated readily by reference to just one scene.



In *Lucina's Rape*, 3.3, Rochester recomposes with considerable freedom and originality *Valentinian*, 2.2, deploying the same four characters—Lucina's two female attendants Claudia and Marcellina, Lucina herself and her husband's eunuch Lycias—and dividing the action into two parts. In both plays the scene opens with Claudia and Marcellina engaged in some playful banter that serves to relieve the dramatic tension in a way that is similar to the porter's soliloquy in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, 3.2. In *Valentinian*, Lucina and Lycias then enter together, Lycias having off-stage handed her husband's ring to her as confirmation that he wishes her to attend Court; this she agrees to do. By contrast, in *Lucina's Rape* the heroine enters by herself to describe a nightmare from which she has just awoken, and is then joined by Lycias, who verbosely conveys the spurious message from her husband, and gives her the ring. Rochester triples the 73 lines of Fletcher's scene to a total of 223 lines, retaining only the opening four lines and subtly adjusting their tone:

Claudia. Sirrha, what ayles my Lady, that of late
She never cares for company?
Marcellina. I know not,
Unless it be that company causes Cuckolds.
Claudia. That were a childish feare.
Marcellina. What were those Ladyes,
Came to her lately? from the Court?
(*Valentinian*, 2.2.1–5)



³⁵ Sprague, *Beaumont and Fletcher*, 169; Carver, "Rochester's *Valentinian*," 25.

Clau: Prethee what ayles my Lady that of late
Shee never cares for company?

Mar: I know not
Unless it bee that company causes Cuckolds.

Claud: Ridiculous! That were a childish feare—
Tis opportunity does cause em rather
When two made one are glad to bee alone.

(*Lucina's Rape*, 3.3.1–6)

By replacing “Sirrha” by “Prethee” and inserting “Ridiculous!” Rochester places his version firmly in the world of the Restoration theatre. Although the response “Ridiculous!” can be seen to have been dictated by the need to fill out the line, it also adds an attractive sense of vitality and spontaneity to the character of Claudia that Rochester subsequently exploits.

In Fletcher's hands, those opening lines are followed by an exchange of “light-hearted, sexually knowing badinage.”³⁶ The women amuse themselves by describing the appearance of some Court ladies: they are “like old hatcht hilts” [scored sword hilts], “yet [...] painted well,” “sheathed like rotten ships” and “their rudders [...] hang weakly”; their male escorts are similarly dismissed as “Bawdes of five i' th' pound” (lines 7, 8, 11, 12, 27). Rochester doubtless felt that this earthy humour did not bear modernising, and he supplied instead a witty and entertaining exchange between two women who purport to occupy contrasting positions on the scale of female virtue. His Marcellina describes herself as the “weakest of all women” (line 27), while Claudia is a self-professed “Slave of Vertue” (line 46):

Mar: But Claudia why this sitting up all night
In groves by purling streames? this argues heat,
Great heat and vapours which are maine corrupters.

[...]

Claud: Thou art the frailest creature Marcellina
And think'st all womens Honour like thy owne,
Soe thin a cobwebb that each blast of Passion
Can blow away. But for my owne part girle
I thinke I may bee well stil'd Honours Martyr,
With firmest constancy I have endur'd
The raging heats of Passionate Desire:
While flaming Love and boyling Nature both
Were pow'rd upon my Soul with equall Torture,
I arm'd with Resolution stood it out
And kept my Honour safe.

Mar: Thy glorie's greate.
But Claudia thanks to Heaven that I am made

³⁶ Love, *Works*, 460.

The weakest of all women, fram'd soe frayle,
 That Honour nere thought fitt to chuse mee out,
 His Champion against Pleasure: my poore Heart
 For diverse yeares still tost from Flame to Flame
 Is now burnt up to Tinder, every Sparke
 Dropt from kind eyes setts it on fire afresh ...

(*Lucina's Rape*, 3.3.7–9, 15–32)

This is a more refined entertainment than Fletcher supplies. Beginning in Claudia's second speech with a quotation from the *Book of Common Prayer* marriage service describing a couple being "made one," then moving through the mock-heroic language of "groves by purling streames" to an allusion to Cowley's image of "every Sparke" setting on fire a heart that love has previously "burnt up to Tinder," the dialogue evidences a sophistication absent from *Valentinian*.³⁷ Significantly, the two women provide reminders of Rochester's other writing. Marcellina, for example, is strongly reminiscent of Rochester's Artemiza, sharing her breathlessness, liveliness, ruefulness, and concern with female frailty:

But how, my dearest Chloe, shall I sett
 My pen to write, what I would faine forgett,
 Or name that lost thing (Love) without a teare,
 Synce soe debauch'd by ill-bred Customes here?

[...]

This onely Joy, for which poore Wee were made,
 Is growne like Play, to be an Arrant Trade;
 The Rookes creepe in, and it has gott of late
 As many little Cheates, and Trickes, as that.
 But what yet more a Womans heart would vex,
 'Tis cheifely carry'd on by our owne Sexe ...³⁸

In a later exchange, there are further articulations of Rochester's concerns with right reason and affected rules of behaviour that found expression in poems such as "Phillis, be gentler I advise" and "To Corinna." Perhaps it is not fanciful to see even a link to *Alexander Bendo's Brochure* in the reference to "the veriest Mountebanke" and, in Claudia's final response, to Rochester's rapturous letters to Elizabeth Barry, whom he addresses "You are the most afflicting fair creature in the world" and "Dearest of

³⁷ My Soul at first indeed did prove / Of pretty strength against a Dart; / Till I this *Habit* got of Love; / But my consum'd and wasted Heart / Once burnt to *Tinder* with a strong Desire, / Since that by every *Spark* is set on Fire. ("The Inconstant," lines 37–42 in *The Collected Works of Abraham Cowley*, vol. 2, *Poems* (1656), part 1, *The Mistress*, ed. Thomas O'Calhoun, Laurence Heyworth and J. Robert King (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1993), 102.)

³⁸ "A Letter from Artemiza in the Towne to Chloe in the Countrey," lines 36–39, 50–55.

all that ever was deare to me.”³⁹ But most pervasive of all are the echoes of “A Satyre against Reason and Mankind,” not only with its concern with right reason, natural instinct and honour (“My Reason is my friend, Yours is a cheat,/ Hunger calls out, my Reason bids me eat;/ Perversly yours your appetites does mock,/ They ask for food, that answers what’s a clock./ [...] / For all men would be Cowards if they durst” (lines 106–9, 158) but also its display of paradox:

[*Claud.*] With what Tranquillity and peace thou liv’st
 For strip’t of shame, thou hast noe cause of Feare,
 Whils’t I the Slave of Vertue am afraide
 Of every thing I see, and thinke the World
 A Dreadfull wildernesse of Savage Beasts.
 Each man I meet I fancy will devour mee
 And sway’d by Rules not naturall but affected,
 I hate Mankind for feare of beeing Lov’d.
Mar. ’Tis nothing lesse than Witchcraft can constraine
 Still to persist in errorrs wee perceive:
 Preethee reforme, what Nature prompts us to
 And Reason seconds why should wee avoyd?
 This Honour is the veriest Mountebanke—
 It fills our fancies with affected Tricks
 And makes us freakish, what a cheate must that bee
 Which robbes our lives of all their softer howres?
 [...]
 Poore shift still to bee Proud and never pleas’d;
 Yet this is all your honour can doe for yee.
Claud.: Concluded like thy selfe, for sure thou art
 The most corrupt corrupting thing alive ...
 (*Lucina’s Rape*, 3.3.44–59, 67–70).

The engaging exchange is brought to an end with the entry of Lucina, who expresses her foreboding through the description of a dream from which she has just awoken. It is vivid, powerful writing which gains additional force by the contrast of being expressed in heroic couplets:

Mishapen Monsters round in measures went,
 Horrid in Forme with gestures Insolent,
 Grinning through goatish beards; with halfe clos’d Eyes
 They look’t mee in the Face: frighted, To rise
 In vaine I did attempt; meethought noe ground
 Was (to support my sinking footsteps) found;

³⁹ See for example, “Phillis, be gentler I advise,” lines 12–16; “To Corinna,” lines 9–12; Treglown, *Letters*, 103, 131.

In Clammy Foggs like one half choak't I lay,
 Crying for help, my Voice was snatch't away ...
 (*Lucina's Rape*, 3.3.94–101)

The inclusion of a dream of foreboding was Rochester's addition, and Love plausibly suggests that he drew his inspiration from the scene in which Calisto similarly wakes from a "horrid Dream."⁴⁰ But there can be little doubt about the link between the "clammy Foggs" and the description in "Satyre against Mankind" of "Reason, an Ignis fatuus of the Mind" traversing "Errours fenny boggs" (lines 12, 15).

Of particular note in this second part of the scene, though, is Rochester's skill in depicting the villainy of Lycias. Fletcher's Lycias is a thoroughgoing, lying villain in the mould of Shakespeare's Richard III:

Excellent Lady, there are none will hurt you
 [...]
 Madam, I am no Broker
 [...]
 Nor base procurer of mens lusts, Your husband
 Praid me to do this office, I have done it
 [...]
 Why should I couzen you?
 Or were I bribed to doe this villainy,
 Can mony prosper, or the fool that takes it,
 When such a virtue falls.
 (*Valentinian*, 2.2.43, 55, 57–58, 62–65)

In Rochester's hands, Lycias is a villain not only equivalent in evil to Richard III but also his match as a slippery politician. In a letter to Harry Savile, Rochester refers to "the meane Pollicy of Court prudence, wch makes us lye to one another all day, for feare of being betray'd by each other att night";⁴¹ in specious and unctuous language, Lycias purrs speeches of 17 lines (only ended by Lucina's agonised interruption, "But whats all this to Maximus and mee?" in line 134), 13 lines and 22 lines before conveying to Lucina her husband's message of three lines that

Shee instantly should come and see mee here
 That parting griefes to her I may reveale
 And on her Lipps propitious omens Seale ...
 (*Lucina's Rape*, 3.3.194–96).

This delay, effectively underscored by Lucina's question "But how could'st thou employ thy Lavish Tongue / Soe Id'ly to bee telling this soe long" (lines 204–5),

⁴⁰ Love, *Works*, 461.

⁴¹ Treglown, *Letters*, 67.

increases the dramatic tension and the fear of foreboding. Lucina and her waiting women then leave, and the scene is brought to a close with a soliloquy (reminiscent again of Shakespeare's *Richard III*, specifically the passage in which Richard disparagingly asks, "Was ever woman in this humour woo'd?/ Was ever woman in this humour won?" (1.1.229–30)) that reflects once more Rochester's concern with women's honour:

[*Lycia:*] Thanks to the Devill my friend, now all's our owne:
 How easily this Mighty Worke was done;
 Well, first or last all Women must bee wonne:
 It is their Fate and cannot bee withstood;
 The wise doe still comply with Flesh and Bloud;
 For if through Peevish Honour Nature fayle
 They doe but loose their thanks, Art will prevayle.

(*Lucina's Rape*, 3.3.217-23)

Careful examination of the other 1,000 or so additional lines that Rochester includes in *Lucina's Rape* would doubtless similarly prove to be both revealing and rewarding, but what this brief scrutiny of one scene in *Lucina's Rape* unflinchingly emphasises is, firstly, that the play could never be mistaken for one by Fletcher, and, secondly, that the revisions could hardly have been written by anyone other than Rochester. Its tone is not that of a blood-letting Jacobean revenge tragedy (much in vogue during the early part of the seventeenth century) but of a drama of heroic dimensions (much to the taste of Restoration audiences), where the major themes of Rochester's poetry resurface and are given a fresh perspective. Thus the red herrings offered by Wolseley in relation to the unfinished state of the play and Rochester's stylistic debt to Fletcher can be seen as serious errors of judgment that have militated against *Lucina's Rape* being accepted on its own terms. In so doing, Wolseley obliterated the fact that Rochester's grafting of around 1,300 lines onto the plot of Fletcher's play was the product of his artistic maturity, and valuably illuminates the personal, social and political contexts in which he wrote. Rather than being vicariously regarded as irretrievably flawed, therefore, *Lucina's Rape* should at last be recognised as "show[ing] a Master's Hand"⁴² and providing a long-overlooked opportunity for the distinctive voice of one of the most remarkable personalities of the Restoration period to be more fully appreciated.

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⁴² "Prologue to *Valentinian*. Spoken by Mrs. Cook the second Day" (line 33), in Love, *Works*, 643.