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Roxana's Georgian Setting

RODNEY M. BAINÉ

Not since 1840 have readers of Daniel Defoe's *Fortunate Mistress* perceived that Roxana's London setting is that of George I. For in reprinting the novel that year in their editions of Defoe, both William Hazlitt, Jr., and Sir G. S. Lewis restored the original, 1724 title: *The Fortunate Mistress, or a History of the Life and Vast Variety of Fortunes of Mademoiselle de Beleau, afterwards called the Countess de Wintelsheim in Germany, being the Person known by the Name of the Lady Roxana in the Time of Charles II.* Subsequent editors also reprinted this title. Unfortunately it is misleading, especially in its indication of setting. For if Roxana, born about 1673 and in her early forties when she entertains the English nobility in her Pall Mall residence, is performing for the courtiers of Charles II, Defoe has obviously created a discrepancy. M. Paul Dottin, among others, has explained this anachronism as a defect in Defoe's art: "Visiblement, lorsqu'il s'embarqua dans la seconde partie de son ouvrage, De Foe avait oublié les dates précises qu'il avait données dès la première page. Tous les épisodes du débout du livre . . . prouvent que De Foe avait l'intention de faire vivre son héroïne . . . à son époque. C'est probablement en cours de route, séduit par les développements intéressants qu'offrirait la description de la vie mondaine sous Charles II, qu'il abandonna son plan primitif. Cette contradiction fondamentale entre les deux parties du roman ruine l'ensemble de l'oeuvre."¹

But this discrepancy is not Defoe's. As I demonstrate in my study "The Evidence from Defoe's Title Pages,"² the title page which precedes a Defoe novel is an advertisement or bill of fare prepared not by the author, but by the "conger," or syndicate of booksellers who published the book. They wished to advertise their product successfully, not to indicate its contents precisely. Defoe surely had nothing to do with the title page for *The Fortunate Mistress*. Nowhere in the text did he call his heroine "Mademoiselle de Beleau" or "the Countess de Wintelsheim." He called her only Roxana; and he

¹Paul Dottin, *Daniel De Foe et ses Romans* (Paris, 1924), III, 749. Subsequent references will be incorporated in the text.

²Rodney M. Baine, "The Evidence from Defoe's Title Pages," *Studies in Bibliography*, 25 (1972), 185-191.

had her tell us once, indirectly, that her name was Susan.³ Instead of giving her name, as Editor, he explained in the Preface that “*it was necessary to conceal Names and Persons*” (p. 1). Moreover, although Roxana is the mistress of a German prince for eight years, she never marries him and never, so far as we are told, goes to Germany. The misleading title page has marred our appreciation of Defoe’s artistry by placing the latter part of the action in the wrong century—in the London of Charles II rather than that of George I.

So patently misleading was the title page of *The Fortunate Mistress* that except for the publishers of the serialized editions of 1740, all the eighteenth-century publishers deleted from their new titles the phrase “in the Time of Charles II.”⁴ The title of the second edition, of 1735, reads simply *The Life and Adventures of Roxana, the Fortunate Mistress, or most Unhappy Wife*. The 1742, 1745, and 1750 editions were titled *Roxana, or the Fortunate Mistress, being a History of the Life and Vast Variety of Fortunes of Mademoiselle de Beleau*; and the 1774 edition, which first acknowledged Defoe’s authorship, reverted to the simple title of the second edition. Thus during most of the century and until 1840, readers of *The Fortunate Mistress* were not misled by an inaccurate title page, but could perceive that Roxana’s London setting was that of George I.

Not only did the publishers perceive and remove the misleading phrase in the title page; authors of eighteenth-century continuations carried on with Defoe’s original time scheme. Thus the writer of the 1745 continuation, which was conventionally reprinted with Defoe’s text until recently, continued Roxana’s story into the reign of George II. In an appended note from Isabel Johnson, Amy’s successor as Roxana’s maid, he ended Roxana’s life in Amsterdam on July 2, 1742, when she was sixty-five years old. By Defoe’s chronology she would have been sixty-nine, but in either chronology she would have enjoyed her London triumph in the reign of George I.

To establish Roxana’s London setting, Defoe provided ample and relatively consistent indications of his time scheme throughout the novel. Whenever he departed from this scheme, he varied by a year or two at most. He established the chronology firmly upon the date 1683, when Roxana, “about ten years old” (p. 6), is brought to England by

³Daniel Defoe, *Roxana, the Fortunate Mistress*, ed. Jane Jack (London, 1964), p. 205. Subsequent references to *The Fortunate Mistress* will cite this edition and will be incorporated in the text.

⁴The bibliographical information concerning the eighteenth-century editions and continuations of *The Fortunate Mistress* is best available in Spiro Peterson’s excellent unpublished Harvard dissertation of 1953: “Defoe’s *Roxana* and its Eighteenth-Century Sequels: a Critical and Bibliographical Study.”

her Huguenot parents. The date 1683 was not a mistake for, say, 1643: Defoe carefully marked the period of arrival as that of the Huguenot refugees. "My Father and Mother," Roxana explains, were "People of better Fashion, than ordinarily the People call'd REFUGEES at that Time were . . ." (p. 5). The term was first used, according to the *OED*, in 1685 for these Huguenots. A reasonably accurate chronology can be based upon the 1683 date and other information which Defoe furnished in the novel.

Date	Roxana's age	Period or Event	Duration
1673		Roxana is born	
1683	10	Roxana comes to England	
1688-1695	15-22	Wife of brewer	7 yrs.
1695-1696	22-23	Destitute "widow"	1
1696-1703	23-30	Mistress of jeweller	7
1703-1711	30-38	Mistress of German prince	8
1711-1712	38-39	Business in Holland	9 mos.
1712-1713	39-40	Settling in England	1 yr.
1713-1715	40-42	Roxana, entertainer	2
1715-1718	42-45	Mistress of royalty?	3
1718-1720	45-46	Mistress of elderly nobleman	2
1720-1721	46-47	Roxana as Quakeress	1
1721-1724	48-51	Wife of Dutch merchant	3

Although in the absence of dates other than 1683 these dates must be posited on spans of time mentioned in the novel, many such spans are furnished, and the ages of Roxana and her children are occasionally given. Thus when Roxana returns to England, she has been away for fifteen years (p. 188). Not long before she remarries, she confesses to twenty-five years of wickedness (p. 301), and Amy confesses to fourteen years of sin before she returns to England (p. 125).⁵ Roxana is about fifteen when she marries (p. 7) and "pretty near Fifty" (p. 245) when she remarries.⁶ Such spans of time firmly link the chronology of the first half of the novel with that of the second, London half; and especially helpful for this purpose are the ages of the children, Roxana's son and her daughter Susan. Thus upon her return to England

⁵Earlier, however, Roxana confesses to "six and twenty Years of Wickedness" (p. 188).

⁶About a year earlier she admits to being "above Fifty" (p. 187). Defoe at first implied that her first marriage lasted about nine years (p. 17), but later fixed it at seven (p. 188).

(about 1712) we are told that her youngest child, a son, who would have been born about 1695, is seventeen (p. 190). About a year later Amy discovers that Susan, born about 1693, is their cookmaid, "a great Wench of Nineteen or Twenty Years old" (pp. 195-196, 266).

Apart from the basic date 1683, all the dates in *The Fortunate Mistress* are relative except for one event; and this event, significantly, Defoe selected after he had sketched the London scenes. Roxana's brewer husband is wounded in the battle of "Mons" (p. 232), and he dies later from his injuries in the "Hospital of the Invalids." This battle was almost certainly the bloody engagement of Malplaquet, on September 11, 1709, where, just outside of Mons, the Allies suffered nearly 20,000 casualties, and the French 12,000.

In general, the picture of aristocratic London society in *The Fortunate Mistress* fits the court of George I and the Prince of Wales much better than that of Charles II. Especially is this true of Roxana's gaming assemblies. "Her Lady," Susan reports, "kept little less than a Gaming-Ordinary; or, as it wou'd be call'd in the Times since that, as an Assembly for Gallantry and Play" (p. 290). Since, according to the *OED*, the term "Assembly" was first used for Roxana's type of establishment in 1718, Defoe was here setting this conversation after that time. Although gaming was rife in the Restoration, Charles II "tacitly discouraged" it. To keep the ladies out of debt, he even "sent an agent to the Foire de Saint Germain to buy little things to play for."⁷ One can hardly visualize Roxana's setting up a gaming assembly to entrap Charles II. But George I and the Prince of Wales encouraged, even expected gambling. On November 25, 1714, for example, Mary, Countess Cowper recorded, "The *Prince* was in Bed; but, notwithstanding, all the Ladies of the Bedchamber that were attending were called in, and Tables were placed, and we were all set to play at Ombre with the Lords of the *Prince's* Bedchamber. . . ."⁸ Nor were these aristocrats playing for small stakes. On Twelfth Night, 1715, Lady Cowper recorded, "My Mistress [the Princess of Wales] and the Duchess of *Montague* went halves at Hazard, and won 600*l.* Mr. *Archer* came in great Form to offer me a Place at the Table; but I laughed, and said he did not know me if he thought that I was capable of venturing two hundred Guineas at Play—for None sit down to the Table with less" (p. 43). Those who played for low stakes were ridiculed. On November 15, 1714, for example, Lady Cowper complained, "I played at Basset as low as I could, for which they

⁷Arthur Bryant, *King Charles II* (London, 1932), p. 158.

⁸Mary Cowper, *Diary of Mary, Countess Cowper, Lady of the Bedchamber to the Princess of Wales* (London, 1864), p. 22. Subsequent references to this diary will be taken from this edition and will be incorporated in the text.

rallied me . . .” (p. 14). This sort of entertainment George I himself occasionally indulged in, and he frequently watched and encouraged it. Thus by the end of the summer of 1717, “an assembly, or drawing-room was held every evening except Sunday. . . . Balls were held there [in the Cartoon Gallery at Hampton Court] several times a week, and occasionally a concert; if there were no other diversions, there were always card tables and a billiard table set up in the Gallery. The king joined these parties every evening at about ten and stayed until after midnight.”⁹ In 1720 the Princess of Wales reported that in a recent audience with the King, he “asked her to play. She said, ‘Is it your Majesty’s Commands I should?’ He said, ‘Yes; not only now, but I would have you always play, as you were used to do’” (Cowper, p. 161).

If gaming was more fashionable in the court of George I than in that of Charles II, royal liaisons must have seemed to Defoe just as open. When George I arrived in England with part of his entourage of German mistresses, leaving behind him his divorced and imprisoned wife, some of the English women, like the Duchess of Shrewsbury, competed for his favors. If we look in the other court—that of the Prince of Wales—we find him no more continent than his father. His open liaison with Mary Howard, later Countess of Suffolk, had begun in Hamburg before his father’s accession, and there were evidently other women in casual affairs. Lady Mary Wortley Montague characterized the Princess’ court as a “court so lewd” that there was “‘not one of all your train/ Whom censure blasts not, and dishonour stain!’”¹⁰ A Prussian observer, Frederick Bonet, even reported, “La médisance va jusqu’à préférer les moeurs de Charles II à celles de George.”¹¹

In addition to a demonstrable chronology and a proper general setting, probably the most telling evidence for the Georgian setting of Roxana’s London is her Turkish costume. Although Turkish dress and customs were of some interest earlier, Mohammedan life and art were especially popular early in the eighteenth century. Then *Turkish Tales* (1708), *The Arabian Nights Entertainments* (before 1712), and *Persian Tales* (1714) helped to popularize the Near East. When George I came to the throne he brought with him his two Turkish personal servants, Mustapha and Mahomet, who alone were allowed to dress and undress their master. Then from about 1719

⁹John M. Beattie, *The English Court in the Reign of George I* (Cambridge, 1967), p. 265.

¹⁰Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, “Roxana, or the Drawing Room,” in *Town Eclogues, The Letters and Works of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, ed. Lord Wharnccliffe (Philadelphia, 1837), II, 345.

¹¹Wolfgang Michael, *England under George I* (1936; rpt. New York, 1970), I, 83, n.5.

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, upon her return from Constantinople, helped to popularize Turkish customs like small-pox vaccinations and woman's (fictional) freedom—and Turkish dress.

In the plot Roxana's oriental dress is of crucial importance. When she performs her oriental dance in Turkish attire, she is acclaimed as the new Roxana. She gives the costume detailed attention:

the Robe was a fine *Persian*, or *Indian* Damask; the Ground white, and the Flowers blue and gold, and the Train held five Yards; the Dress under it, was a Vest of the same, embroider'd with Gold, and set with some Pearl in the Work, and some *Turquois* Stones; to the Vest, was a Girdle five or six Inches wide, after the *Turkish* Mode; and on both Ends where it join'd, or hook'd, was set with Diamonds for eight Inches either way, only they were not true Diamonds; but no-body knew that but myself.

The Turban, or Head-Dress, had a Pinnacle on the top, but not above five Inches, with a Piece of loose Sarcenet hanging from it; and on the Front, just over the Forehead, was a good Jewel, which I had added to it. (p. 174)

When she next dances in it, she varies the costume slightly and again describes it in detail (p. 180); and she describes also the Georgian and Armenian costumes of her two visitors. She describes it a third time when she dons it in honor of her Dutch husband (p. 246).

Roxana's rise to fame in this garb, ironically, causes her daughter Susan to associate her former mistress with her own mother and to pursue Roxana relentlessly. It is the only costume in which the daughter ever clearly saw Roxana. Thus the Persian dress possesses a plot function and a thematic value which make it far more than merely exotic and decorative. Appropriately enough, on the frontispiece of the first edition *Roxana* appears, supposedly, in this garb. In almost every subsequent eighteenth-century edition, moreover, she so appears either on the frontispiece or on an added folding plate, advertised on the title page.

Such a dress would suggest a setting in the eighteenth century. Authentic Turkish costumes had not appeared on the Restoration stage; and as Susan reports expert testimony, "it cou'd not come from the Theatre at *Paris*" (p. 289). The Restoration *Roxana* usually wore a turban and sometimes a veil, but not, like our *Roxana*, a genuine oriental costume. In France evidently Mlle. Favart first appeared in authentic Turkish costume as late as 1761 in her role as *Roxana* in *Soliman le Second, ou les Sultanes*, and Mlle. Clairon acted *Roxana*

in stylized, or authentic costume about the same time.¹²

Since Roxana's triumph is set in the London of the eighteenth century, the Restoration models previously suggested for her portrait have obviously been taken from the wrong century. Four candidates have been nominated: Mary Butler, Mlle. Bardou, Mary Moders, and Hester Davenport. "One of Defoe's originals for her character," according to John Robert Moore, "was the notorious Mrs. Mary Butler, the former mistress of the second Duke of Buckingham, who was convicted of forging bonds for very large amounts in the name of Sir Robert Clayton, the trustee of Buckingham's estate."¹³ But aside from being mistress of a nobleman and knowing Sir Robert, Roxana has nothing in common with Mary Butler. Mlle. Bardou did indeed dance for the courtiers of Charles II, but no oriental dance, and she was about as ugly as a woman could be. Dottin suggested that in creating Roxana, Defoe "résoluit d'assembler les souvenirs indistincts, qui flottaient encore dans les esprits, de Mary Carleton, [Mary Moders] la 'princesse allemande' " (III, 720). But aside from Roxana's reference to the "German princess," which may be an ironic reference to George's divorced queen as well as to Carleton, there is nothing to connect the two; and the most recent study of the appearance of the German princess in Restoration and eighteenth century literature does not even mention *The Fortunate Mistress*.¹⁴

If Defoe scholars were determined to nominate a Restoration model they might more logically have chosen Hester Davenport, self-styled Lady Oxford, whom Dottin mentioned briefly as a possibility (III, 741). For during the Restoration period the name Roxana was evidently frequently given to her. She played the role of Roxilana, or Roxana in the Second Part of Davenant's *Siege of Rhodes* in 1661. The following year she became the morganatic wife of Aubrey de Vere, Earl of Oxford. The story of their fake marriage and its exciting aftermath was widely circulated in various versions and was related by, inter alia, the Baroness D'Aulnoy in 1694-1695 and by Anthony Hamilton in *Memoirs of the Count de Grammont* in 1713. In the early eighteenth century she was still very much alive and still well known. In 1703, when she was sixty-two, she married Peter Hoet, of Gray's Inn, and she lived until 1717. As late as 1723 George Vertue was

¹²Montagu Summers, *The Restoration Theatre* (London, 1934), p. 261; Fedor Kommissarzhevskii, *The Costume of the Theatre* (New York, 1932), pp. 128, 129.

¹³*Daniel Defoe: Citizen of the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), pp. 249-250. See also Moore's "Two Sources for Defoe's *Roxana*," in *Defoe in the Pillory and Other Studies* (Bloomington, 1939), pp. 40-49.

¹⁴C. F. Main, "The German Princess; or, Mary Carleton in Fact and Fiction," *Huntington Library Bulletin*, 10 (1956), 166-185.

describing a portrait of her as that of "Roxilana the actress."¹⁵ Our Roxana of course resembles the Restoration Roxana in several ways, but our Roxana never goes on stage, and we never see her even attend a play.

But Roxana's Turkish costume, among other evidence, suggests clearly that Defoe wished the reader to visualize present time, in the courts of George I and the Prince of Wales. Here, about five years before *The Fortunate Mistress* appeared, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu had appeared in her Turkish costumes. Probably few of the first readers of the novel ever met her there, or saw any of the numerous pictures of her in her oriental attire. She must have enjoyed the figure she cut: there are extant such portraits of her by Kneller (commissioned by Pope, for his drawing room in Twickenham), Jonathan Richardson, Charles Philips (?), and at least one other painter, as well as a miniature. But if these portraits were unknown to Defoe and to most of his readers, many of them could have seen the satirical engraving of Lady Mary as "The Female Traveller," where she is dressed in outlandish costume and wears a crucifix.¹⁶ Since Roxana never mentions wearing a crucifix, the one which adorns her in the frontispiece of the novel may derive from the print of Lady Mary, though the artist, not Defoe, would have been responsible for the borrowing. Moreover Lady Mary and possibly her protégée Maria Skerrett served as models for Roxana's two visitors who arrive in Georgian and Armenian costumes "by Order of a Noble Person, who, with his Family, had been in *Persia*" (p.178).

Although Defoe surely did not model his Roxana upon the personality of Lady Mary, the two have other tastes in common besides Turkish attire. Lady Mary evidently never aspired to be mistress to George I, or the Prince of Wales; yet she intrigued both. After her considerable stay in Hanover with her husband, on the way to Turkey, an observer reported, "Since her Arrival the *King* has took but little Notice of any other Lady, not even of Madame *Kielmansegg*, which the Ladies of *Hanover* don't relish very well . . ." (Cowper, p. 195). For a while the Prince of Wales was also an admirer. In her Journal Lady Mary recorded that at one of the Princess' card parties at Leicester House "the Prince openly admired her, and called out to his wife to

¹⁵John Harold Wilson, *All the King's Ladies* (Chicago, 1958), pp. 12-14, citing Marie Catherine Jumelle de Berneville, Baronne d'Aulnoy, *Memoirs of the Court of England in 1675*, trans. Mrs. W. H. Arthur (London, 1913), pp. 269-278, and Anthony Hamilton, *Memoirs of the Count Grammont*, ed. Gordon Goodwin (London, 1903), II, 53-55; and J. H. Wilson, "Lord Oxford's 'Roxilana,'" *Theatre Notebook*, 12 (1957), 14-16, citing *The Vertue Note Books* (Oxford, 1930), I, 117.

¹⁶See Lady Mary's *Letters*, ed. Robert Halsband (Oxford, 1965-1967), facing II, 304.

see how becomingly she was dressed.”¹⁷ Yet she was evidently on good terms with the royal mistresses and with the Princess. Before she left England, the Baroness von Schulenburg was jotting her notes in French; and abroad Lady Mary corresponded not only with her but with Madame Kielmansegge and with Princess Caroline. Evidently Lady Mary, “alone among English ladies, enjoyed the card parties and beer-drinkings in the King’s private apartment, with Schulemburg and Kielmansegge.”¹⁸

A definite parallel between Roxana and Lady Mary, however, is their similar attitude toward the position of woman in marriage. Despite the fact that she is carrying his child, Roxana refuses (until years later) to marry her Dutch lover, because she is unwilling to resume a dependent status. In a letter addressed to the Abbe Conti Lady Mary discoursed on the superior freedom of Turkish women, a discussion published without her permission in 1719; and her advanced views concerning dowry and divorce were doubtless fairly well known before they were published in 1726.¹⁹

If one looks for additional models for the portrait of Roxana among the mistresses of George I, he will find little except the card-playing, middle-aged German mistresses, who were, like Roxana, in their forties when George assumed the throne. Perhaps a more likely model was the Italian Marchesa Paleotti, subsequently Duchess of Shrewsbury, who spoke French to the King and entertained him at supper parties where they played ombre.²⁰ But probably we are looking in the wrong circle. Although Defoe scholars have assured us long and often that Roxana was mistress to a king, Roxana herself never boasts that she realized her ambition. “I had Pride enough to expect, and Folly enough to believe, tho’ indeed, without ground,” she admits, that she had been caressed “by a Great Monarch” (p. 202). Yet what else could she mean other than a liaison with the King or with the Prince of Wales when she speaks of covering “from humane Eyes or Ears” the scene in which “for three Years and about a Month, Roxana liv’d retir’d, having been oblig’d to make an Excursion, in a Manner, and with a Person, which Duty, and private Vows, obliges

¹⁷Robert Halsband, *The Life of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu* (New York, 1960), p. 96.

¹⁸W. H. Wilkins, *Caroline the Illustrious, Queen-Consort of George II and sometime Queen-Regent* (London, 1904), p. 168.

¹⁹*The Genuine Copy of a Letter written from Constantinople by an English Lady . . . to a Venetian Nobleman* (London, 1719) and “An Essay on the Mischief of Giving Fortunes with Women in Marriage,” in Curll’s *Miscellanea* (London, 1726). See Halsband, pp. 100, 117, 121-122, where the latter attribution is first made.

²⁰Wilkins, p. 119; Cowper, pp. 8-9.

her not to reveal, at least, not yet" (p. 181). If Roxana had not specifically disavowed any liaison with a "Great Monarch," she might have been hinting at an excursion with George I to Hanover, where from 1716 he spent a good deal of his time, accompanied by the Baroness Kielmannsegge. Here indeed Roxana could have been known as "the Countess de Wintelsheim in Germany." If these three years formed "the most glorious Retreat . . . that ever Woman had" (p. 182), yet were not spent with the King, then perhaps Roxana was suggesting that she had been mistress to the Prince of Wales.

Among the women in the court of the Prince and Princess, several women may have offered Defoe suggestions for aspects of Roxana. For example, Mary Ker, Countess of Roxburgh, appears as Roxana in Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's "Roxana, or the Drawing-Room," one of Lady Mary's Town Eclogues pirated in 1716 by Curll in his *Court Poems*. Elizabeth Hervey, Countess of Bristol, who was "notoriously addicted to cards,"²¹ had her assembly, where the King sometimes supped. She was not far from Roxana's age. Lady Mary had used her as the model for her Cardelia, in her "Basset Table," of the Town Eclogues, but evidently intended making amends by bringing her Turkish material for a dress.²²

The one character in *The Fortunate Mistress* who could not possibly have been modelled principally upon a Georgian original is Sir Robert Clayton, Roxana's financial advisor, for Sir Robert died in 1707. The anachronistic appearance of Sir Robert in a Georgian setting creates problems. Although he obviously does not establish a Restoration setting, his presence does seem to suggest a time no later than that of Queen Anne. Perhaps Sir Robert, a Director of the Bank of England, is brought in to show the sound business investments of a woman who is running a gambling assembly but investing in something like the Bank of England during the development of the South Sea Company.

The only piece of evidence for dating the London scenes "in the Time of Charles II" seems to be the appearance in the narrative of the "D—— of M———th as one of Roxana's dancing partners (p. 181). This designation seems to fit only the Duke of Monmouth, who was executed in 1685.

But the presence of the D—— of M———th and of Sir Robert Clayton do not demonstrate the careless artistry of an author who has forgot the setting of the first half of his novel. They provided the protective ambiguity which Defoe must have felt that he needed for a

²¹Halsband, p. 49.

²²*Letters*, II, 321.

novel which embodied social criticism of contemporary court circles. No critic today seems to object violently to Swift's inconsistency in presenting diminished models of Queen Anne and George I together on the throne of Lilliput. Yet, safe in Ireland, Swift took care to avoid any direct negotiations with his publisher and employed anonymity, inconsistency, and irony in the narrative itself. Why should Defoe, several times in trouble before in London, hesitate to protect himself with similar devices? He had been in serious trouble for his criticism more than once before, had been jailed and pilloried. On October 25, 1718, Nathaniel Mist had been brought before the two Secretaries of State, Lord Stanhope and Mr. Craggs, concerning a letter in his weekly journal signed "Sir Anthony Politick," which criticized the government's ineffective foreign policy. To protect himself, Mist admitted that Defoe had written the offending letter.²³ Mist was later to be imprisoned for publishing overtly the same satirical picture of royal mistresses as is suggested covertly in *The Fortunate Mistress*. In a letter in Mist's *Journal* for May 27, 1721, the writer complained, "We are ruined by trulls; nay, what is more vexatious, by old ugly trulls, such as could not find entertainment in the most hospitable hundreds of Old Drury."²⁴ When in 1718 Mist implicated Defoe, T. Warner, the leading publisher of the conger which later published *The Fortunate Mistress*, also testified against Defoe. If Defoe felt the need to protect himself by adding the anachronistic Sir Robert Clayton and the D—— of M———th, his publishers might well have added to the title page "in the Time of Charles II," in order to protect themselves. After all, the printer Matthews was executed in 1719 for printing the anonymous *Vox Populi, Vox Dei*.

Like Swift, then, Defoe employed deliberate ambiguity and irony to avoid retaliation. Also, he took advantage of the opportunity to make telling satiric thrusts by having his readers contrast the court of Charles II with that of George I—to the disadvantage of the latter. Thus Roxana comments that the Queen did not affect "to be very much in publick" (p. 172). Is she speaking of Charles's Catherine, who very rarely withdrew herself from the public, or more likely of George's Sophia Dorothea, who was still imprisoned in the Castle of Ahlden for adultery? "The KING had several Mistresses, who were prodigiously fine," Roxana informs us, "and there was a glorious Show on that Side indeed: If the Sovereign game himself a Loose, it cou'd not be expected the rest of the Court shou'd all be Saints . . ." (p.

²³See James Sutherland, *Defoe* (Philadelphia, 1938), pp. 223-224.

²⁴John Heneage Jesse, *Memoirs of the Court of England from the Revolution in 1688 to the Death of George the Second* (Philadelphia, 1843), II, 201.

172). Charles II had several mistresses, true, but not one could be described as “prodigiously fine,” like George’s Baroness Kielmannsegge, known as the “Elephant.” According to one historian, “No woman came amiss to him, if they were very willing and very fat. . . .”²⁵

Sometimes the full effect of Defoe’s irony is enjoyed only by the alert reader who has the Georgian court in mind. Consider, for example, some of the ironies implicit in the following discussion between Roxana’s daughter, Susan, Roxana, and the Quakeress:

. . . the Footmen us’d to say, that she [Roxana] was to be sent for to Court.

To Court, *said I*, why she was at Court, wa’n’t she? the *Pallmall* is not far from *Whitehall*.

Yes, Madam, *says I* [Susan?], but I mean another way.

I understand thee, *says the QUAKER*; *Thou* means’t, *I suppose*, to be Mistress to the KING; yes, Madam, *says she*. (p. 287)

To those who place the setting in the Restoration, there is single irony here—that of purpose. Our heroine would affect to believe that Roxana was being sent for to Whitehall to dance in some royal entertainment in the palace there, rather than to sleep with Charles II. But for those who place the setting in the time of George I, an additional irony appears: “another way” becomes also a direction. Our heroine would then affect to believe that Roxana was being sent for “to Court” on some legal matter at Whitehall. Here, at the Cockpit, as Defoe made clear in his *Tour*, “the business of the government is chiefly carried on.” Here were the Court of Requests, the Court of Wards, and others.²⁶ But Roxana is really, Susan answers, being summoned “another way”: for a different purpose and in a different direction. She is being summoned to sleep with George I and west rather than southeast—to St. James’s Palace rather than to Whitehall, which was no longer a royal residence since the fire of 1691. Such ironies in *The Fortunate Mistress* becomes apparent only when the reader realizes that Defoe is setting his London scenes in the time of George I.²⁷ Then the reader comes to appreciate more than the tem-

²⁵Sir H. M. Imbert-Terry, *A Constitutional King* (London, 1927), pp. 138-139.

²⁶Defoe, *A Tour Thro’ the Whole Island of Great Britain*, ed. G. H. D. Cole, “Everyman” ed. (London, 1927), I, 364, 361.

²⁷For some additional evidence of the contemporaneity of *Roxana*, see David Blewett, “‘Roxana’ and the Masquerades,” *Modern Language Review*, 65 (1970), 499-502.

poral cohesion of the two major parts of the novel. He appreciates as well the contemporary satire and some of the irony which he misses completely if he allows himself to be misled by the original title page.

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