



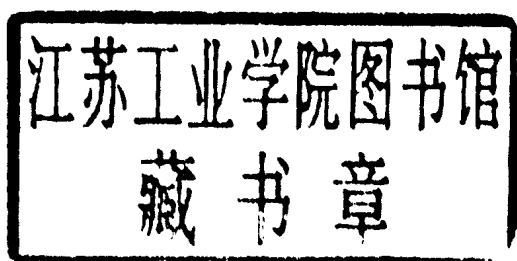
The Early Modern English  
A Facsimile Library of Essential Works

Series II

Printed Writings, 1641–1700: Part 3

Volume 6

Mary Carleton



The Early Modern Englishwoman:  
A Facsimile Library of Essential Works

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Mary Carleton



Selected and Introduced by  
Mihoko Suzuki

General Editors

Betty S. Travitsky and Anne Lake Prescott

ASHGATE

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# PREFACE

## BY THE GENERAL EDITORS

Until very recently, scholars of the early modern period have assumed that there were no Judith Shakespeares in early modern England. Much of the energy of the current generation of scholars has been devoted to constructing a history of early modern England that takes into account what women actually wrote, what women actually read, and what women actually did. In so doing, contemporary scholars have revised the traditional representation of early modern women as constructed both in their own time and in ours. The study of early modern women has thus become one of the most important – indeed perhaps the most important – means for the rewriting of early modern history.

*The Early Modern Englishwoman: A Facsimile Library of Essential Works* is one of the developments of this energetic reappraisal of the period. As the names on our advisory board and our list of editors testify, it has been the beneficiary of scholarship in the field, and we hope it will also be an essential part of that scholarship's continuing momentum.

*The Early Modern Englishwoman* is designed to make available a comprehensive and focused collection of writings in English from 1500 to 1750, both by women and for and about them. The three series of *Printed Writings* (1500–1640, 1641–1700, and 1701–1750) provide a comprehensive if not entirely complete collection of the separately published writings by women. In reprinting these writings we intend to remedy one of the major obstacles to the advancement of feminist criticism of the early modern period, namely the limited availability of the very texts upon which the field is based. The volumes in the facsimile library reproduce carefully chosen copies of these texts, incorporating significant variants (usually in the appendices). Each text is preceded by a short introduction providing an overview of the life and work of a writer along with a survey of important scholarship. These works, we strongly believe, deserve a large readership – of historians, literary critics, feminist critics, and non-specialist readers.

*The Early Modern Englishwoman* also includes separate facsimile series of *Essential Works for the Study of Early Modern Women* and of *Manuscript Writings*. These facsimile series are complemented by *The Early Modern Englishwoman 1500–1750: Contemporary Editions*. Also under our general

editorship, this series includes both old-spelling and modernized editions of works by and about women and gender in early modern England.

New York City  
2006



# INTRODUCTORY NOTE

[Although this volume appears in a tranche of single-author volumes, it offers the notorious Mary Carleton as a discursive focus because of her unusual public visibility, and therefore reprints some of the many texts about Carleton that appeared in the early modern period as well as a listing of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century texts concerning her – General Editors]

Born in 1642 as Mary Moders (though some accounts date her birth in 1634 or 1639), Mary Carleton, commonly known as the German Princess, was a scandalous celebrity in Restoration London. By most accounts the daughter of a Canterbury fiddler, Carleton married first a Canterbury shoemaker, Thomas Steadman, then a Dover surgeon, Thomas Day. Returning from travels on the Continent she assumed the identity of a German aristocrat, Maria de Wolway, and married a lawyer's clerk, John Carleton, who also pretended to be an aristocrat. She gained notoriety as a result of her 1663 trial and acquittal for bigamy, which became the occasion of the publication of *The Case of Madam Mary Carleton*, in which she narrated her version of her life as a 'German Princess', the daughter of the Earl of Cologne. Competing versions of her life appeared in the published accounts of her trial as well as in her husband's pamphlets attacking her as an impostor.

In 1670, Carleton was condemned to be hanged for stealing a silver tankard, but the sentence was commuted, and she was transported to Jamaica in 1671. In 1673, having returned to London from Jamaica, Carleton was again indicted for petty theft (this time, of a piece of plate). Having unsuccessfully pled her belly, she was executed at Tyburn, duly confessing her sins and declaring her repentance as a Roman Catholic. The public's fascination with Carleton is evidenced in the many works on her published in 1673 – for example, the *Memoires* by J. G. [John Goodwin] and Francis Kirkman's *The Counterfeit Lady Unveiled*.

In addition to works that focused on Carleton, a number of texts written in the Restoration and the eighteenth century made reference to her: the diary of Samuel Pepys; Defoe's *Roxana*; and the popular series *Poor Robin's Almanack*, which satirically assigned red-letter days to 'the German Princess' as early as 1675 and as late as 1707. More than a decade after her death a 1684 pamphlet, *The German Princess Revived: Or The London Jilt*, gave an account of Jenney Voss, a cross-dressing thief who was, like Carleton, first transported and then executed for petty theft; the absence of any mention of Carleton in the body of the text indicates that the mere phrase 'the German Princess' remained current as a byword for imposture and thievery. Well into

the eighteenth century Carleton's story was included in collections such as Alexander Smith's *A Compleat History of the Lives and Robberies of the most Notorious Highway-Men, Foot-Pads, Shop-Lifts, and Cheats of Both Sexes* (1719) and the anonymous *Lives and Adventures of the German Princess, Mary Read, Anne Bonny, Joan Philips, Madame Churchill, Betty Ireland, and Anne Hereford* (1755).

In her own time, Carleton was the subject of more than twenty-six pamphlets published in 1663 and 1673. Kirkman, a prominent Restoration printer, remarked of her notoriety in *The Counterfeit Lady Unveiled* (1673): 'So great novelty had not been known or seen in our age, nor in any other age as I can read of ... It was the only talk for all the coffeehouses in and near London'.

The proceedings of Carleton's 1663 trial for bigamy, recorded in *The Arraignment, Tryal and Examination of Mary Moders, Otherwise Stedman, now Carleton*, produced its own pamphlet war between Mary Carleton and her husband John, who wrote and published at his own expense an extended attack on Mary as well as a self-defence, *The Replication, Or Certain Vindicatory Depositions* (included here), and a longer *Ultimum Vale*. Her story inspired a play and a mock epic, texts which significantly responded to Carleton's own emphasis on performance and epic romance in fashioning her aristocratic identity. In T. P. [Thomas Porter]'s play *The Witty Combat: Or, the Female Victor*, Carleton acted the part of herself; in the mock epic *Vercingetorixa: Or, The Germane Princess Reduc'd to an English Habit*, by F. B., Carleton becomes a latter-day, if parodic, Spenserian heroine. Finally, *The Memoires of Mary Carleton* by J. G. [John Goodwin], which gives an account of Carleton's life, including her conviction for theft and execution in 1673, casts the whole affair in the literary framework of satire as well as of the romance epic of Ariosto and the proto-novelistic *Don Quixote* of Cervantes. Space does not permit the inclusion here of all the pamphlet literature, but this volume reprints Carleton's own *The Case of Madam Mary Carleton* along with representative selections from pamphlets written about her; a list of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century texts concerning Carleton is appended to the references section.

### ***The Case of Madam Mary Carleton***

Earlier male scholars, such as Ernest Bernbaum and C.F. Main, considered *The Case of Madam Mary Carleton*, lately stiled *The German Princess, Truly Stated* to have been ghost-written by a male hack, but Elaine Hobby argued for, and recent feminist scholars have assumed, Carleton's authorship of the work. *The Case* expands upon her much shorter *Historicall Narrative of the German Princess*, published earlier in the same year (1663). In the first

preface to *The Case*, Carleton buttresses her claim to be a 'German Princess', the daughter of an earl of Cologne, by appealing to Prince Rupert, Count Palatine of the Rhine, the grandson of James I and a royalist general during the Civil War who became privy counsellor to Charles II after the Restoration. By juxtaposing her own portrait to that of Rupert, she seeks visually to further her association with him. In her first prefatory letter, she protests the injustice of the 'Laws of this Kingdom made against *Femes Covert*' (A3), and in her text, she styles herself a princess in her own right, 'entirely possesst of [her father's] estate, without any Guardian or Trustees' (12-13). In the second preface, addressed 'To The Noble Ladies and Gentlewomen, of England', she takes care to deny the rumours of 'leudness, baseness or meanness' (A7) while seeking her reader's sympathy for an unhappy marriage. Placed early in a nunnery, she writes of her desire to escape women's allotted position of confinement: 'I blindly wished I were (what my Inclinations prompted me to) a man' (16); she further characterizes her experiences as recounted in her narrative as a 'prosecution of my masculine conceptions' (19), such as acquiring an education, learning a number of languages and reading history. Referring to literary genres such as romance and travel narrative, Carleton fittingly usurps the role of the male knight or explorer. In the transcript of the proceedings of the trial from which she emerged victorious, she calls attention to her familiarity with the legal system and its terminology, thereby challenging the gender hierarchy that closed the legal profession to women.

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### ***The Arraignment, Tryal and Examination of Mary Moders, Otherwise Stedman, now Carleton***

*The Arraignment, Tryal and Examination of Mary Moders, Otherwise Stedman, now Carleton, (Stiled, The German Princess)* was considered an official and impartial account of the 1663 trial and was included in the *Collection of State Trials* by Thomas Bayly Howell and William Cobbett. It gives in full the indictment read to Carleton and then reports the dialogue between the clerk of the peace and Carleton as if it were a play. The pamphlet describes in detail the cross-examination of the witnesses and accused and gives Carleton's lengthy and eloquent speech in her own defence: she calls attention to her father-in-law's malice, to his vindictive determination to convict her, and to her accuser's failure to produce a marriage certificate or registration; she claims that her enemies bribed witnesses, adducing the inability of her supposed schoolmates from Canterbury to identify her. The judge instructs the jury to decide the case solely on whether Carleton had in

fact been legally married before, a question that depends on one witness, and reminds the jury of the gravity of a guilty verdict and the unavailability to women of the 'benefit of clergy', a literacy test that would have allowed Carleton to escape execution. After a short deliberation, the jury returned a verdict of not guilty: the judge and the jury evidently concluded either that there was insufficient evidence to convict Carleton or that the inevitable punishment exceeded her offence. Despite her dramatic victory – a great number of people in the court hissed and clapped – her acquittal from the capital crime of bigamy reaffirmed her marriage to John Carleton; when she asked for her jewels and clothes to be returned, the court pronounced that they belonged to her husband.

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### **John Carleton, *The Replication, Or Certain Vindictory Depositions***

John Carleton wrote and had published *The Replication, Or Certain Vindictory Depositions* in order to refute the accusation by the 'scurrilous scribbler', who claimed to 'demonstrate a great Friendship to that distressed Lady' (4), that he and his family had designs on Mary. Rather, his account of their first meeting emphasizes Mary's great charm, seductiveness, and wit, so that 'she left no room for suspicion' and not only John, who boasts of being 'the most Critical person in the World', but also others 'of great Wisdome, Gravity, and Quality' were persuaded (4). Although John identifies himself as 'Gentleman of the Middle Temple' and quotes from Cicero and Ovid in Latin, his work indicates that he is no match for Mary. His likening of her to a Medusa's head which turned him into stone and of his marriage to that of Menelaus and Helen of Troy as well as to that of Adam and Eve suggests that his encounter with Mary has left him overpowered by her superior abilities and feeling emasculated. This is a theme that will run through his later and lengthier complaint, *Ultimum Vale*.

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### **T. P., *A Witty Combat: Or, The Female Victor***

In *An Account of the English Dramatick Poets* (1691), Gerard Langbaine includes T. P. [commonly identified as Thomas Porter] as the author of *The French Conjuror*, a comedy 'founded on two Stories in the Romance of Guzman, the Spanish Rogue' (520); and *A Witty Combat: Or, The Female Victor. A Trage-Comedy*. Pepys records his attendance at a performance of

*The Witty Combat* on 15 April 1664. This play about Mary Carleton emphasizes throughout the performative nature of class: Mary Moders (as she is here called) self-consciously sets out to fashion her identity, proud of the 'Education' and 'Wit' (D) that allow her to play the role of an aristocrat, deploying props such as a letter she intends to be intercepted and class-appropriate deportment such as generosity to servants. In a soliloquy she ponders alternative theatrical identities for herself, settling on that of a noblewoman in exile, modelling herself on Christina, the 'Sweedish Queen' (Dv). John Carleton, the brother of the keeper of the inn where she lodges, though insulted by the cellarman as a 'Scriveners Boy' and a 'Rump of a Lawyer' (C3), also seeks to perform the part of a Lord by hiring a coach and footboys. Although the characters are initially taken in by Moders's performance as a 'person of Quality' (D2v), she is unmasked immediately after her marriage to John, and excoriated by his father as a 'base imposture' and 'Strumpet' (F2). At the conclusion of the play, a discussion among several 'Gentlemen' concerning her deportment at the trial and the prospective verdict is followed by the heroine's declaration to the audience that it has no grounds to judge her because 'The Worlds a Cheat, and we that move in it / In our degrees do exercise our Wit' (F2v). The play thus allows her the final word, spoken on stage by Carleton herself.

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### **F. B., *Vercingetorixa: Or, The Germane Princess Reduc'd to An English Habit***

*Vercingetorixa: Or, The Germane Princess Reduc'd to An English Habit*, a mock-epic in heroic couplets, derives its title from the feminine form of *Vercingetorix*, a famous leader of the Gauls in Caesar's *Bellum Gallicum* (*The Gallic Wars*) – familiar to those with basic education, because Caesar was taught in the schools. Following the example of the *Faerie Queene* and *Paradise Lost*, the poem is prefaced with multiple commendatory verses addressed to the poet. Styling its protagonists as Princess and Knight, it parodies Spenser by having Carleton, like Britomart before her, look into a mirror to see the image of her beloved, and a 'wise Magician' (5) – recalling Spenser's Merlin – designate him as her proper mate. The poem also makes clear its royalist allegiance by making repeated disparaging references to 'Oliver' [i.e., Cromwell] (16), the execution of Charles, and the 'Rump-Parliament' (31). In general, the poem is not unfavourable to Carleton, for example admiring her 'Pleading her Cause like fluent *Cato*' (41). It concludes by promising a second 'Canto', an account of Carleton's confinement, trial, and acquittal.

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**J. G., *The Memoires of Mary Carleton***

J. G. [John Goodwin]'s *The Memoires of Mary Carleton: Commonly stiled, the German Princess. Being A Narrative Of Her Life and Death* was one of three biographies produced after Carleton's trial and execution in 1673. The opening account of her life before she became entangled with the Carletons is a contradictory mixture of admiration for her 'very quick Apprehension' and her 'being Mistris of as many Languages as there are Liberal Arts' (4), and of debunking, at times misogynist and vulgar, satire: 'as common as a Barber's Chair, no sooner one was out, but another was in ... as much addicted to dissimulation as any of that sex' (6). The author directs his satire towards John Carleton (whom he mocks as an 'Irishman' [21]) and towards his family as much as toward Mary herself, finding the '*English Lord and the German Princess*' (26) equally guilty: 'to deceive the deceiver is no deceit' (24). In fact the author appears more sympathetic to Mary than to John, whose writings he characterizes as 'abusive Scribble' (38) while he approvingly describes Mary's 'nimble ... Reparties' (44) and equanimity at her trial. Although the account of the years after her acquittal is sketchy (he does assess her performance on stage as coming short of her performances in life), the narrative becomes more detailed after her return from Jamaica, a shift due primarily to the author's access to the testimony of the victims of her thefts. While emphasizing her hybrid or 'piebal'd' nature as 'English-German' and 'Protestant-Papist' (67) as well as her crossing the boundaries of gender, the author appears interested in understanding the essential constancy of Carleton's character throughout her life and in different places: 'Change of Aire works no change on the Affections of the Mind' (54). The essential quality for Carleton is her energetic intelligence: he calls her an 'active Woman ... Machiavilianess, whose restless spirit was always plotting new mischiefs; her wits were always at work to find out new adventures' (75-6). Despite the clever pun on 'Machiavilianess', the author's predominant judgement of Carleton is positive. Throughout, he places Carleton in literary contexts, comparing her to '*Guzman, Quixot, or Lazarillo*' (8), calling her a 'Lady Errant', mockingly praising her as a 'Brave bold *Virago!* Fit to be Queen of the *Amazons*' (90); while admiring Carleton's fluency in languages, including French, the author himself quotes from Virgil, Cicero, Ovid and other Latin authors, as well as from Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*.

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## Twentieth-Century Scholarship and Criticism about Carleton

In 1914, Ernest Bernbaum's monograph treated the narratives about Mary Carleton as forerunners of the eighteenth-century English novel, and in 1956 C.F. Main wrote a bibliographic essay on Carleton with the aim of updating Bernbaum. Although Main located a number of pamphlets that Bernbaum considered to have been lost (including *The Case*), additional pamphlets that Main considered lost have now come to light, as well as some others of which neither had been aware. In 1961, Spiro Peterson included Kirkman's *The Counterfeit Lady Unveiled* in a collection of seventeenth-century English criminal fiction. In the 1980s, Carleton's *Case* received attention from critics interested in the new scholarship on gender and class: Janet Todd initiated the feminist re-examination of Carleton by discussing *The Case* as an example of 'growth in the power of female self-selling'; Michael McKeon extended Bernbaum's project from a Marxist perspective by treating *The Case* as an example of 'progressive' fiction of social mobility in his *Origins of the English Novel*. In the 1990s, the flourishing of feminist scholarship and the concomitant interest in recovering and re-examining women's writings refocused work on Carleton: Janet Todd and Elizabeth Spearing edited *The Case* along with *The Life of Mary Frith*, and Hero Chalmers and I examined Carleton's narrative as an exemplary representation of the female subject in seventeenth-century England. *Her Own Life*, an anthology of seventeenth-century women's autobiographies, included excerpts from *The Case*, making the text available for use in the classroom; in a separate essay, Helen Wilcox, one of the editors of the anthology, discussed *The Case* along with other autobiographies by Anne Clifford and Anne Wentworth. More recently, a selection from the same work was included in *The Longman Anthology of British Literature* (along with selections from Pepys and John Evelyn), exemplifying the rethinking of the canon of British literature in order to include more women writers, especially those not of the elite classes, as well as reflecting the renewed scholarly interest in Carleton. Similarly, Betty S. Travitsky and Anne Lake Prescott's anthology of paired writings from early modern England by both men and women included an excerpt from Carleton's *Arraignment* as a text that illuminates women's status under early modern law. In 2004, almost a century after Bernbaum's book, another monograph on Carleton was published by Mary Jo Kietzman, this time as an example of 'the self-fashioning of an early modern Englishwoman', as well as a new *DNB* article by Todd and an article by Valerie Wayne on Carleton's successful performance of class in the context of plays by Thomas Middleton and Aphra Behn.

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#### *Seventeenth-Century Texts concerning Carleton*

1663

*The Arraignment, Tryal and Examination of Mary Moders, Otherwise Stedman, now Carleton, (Stiled, the German Princess)*, Wing A3764

*The Articles and Charges of Impeachment against the German Lady, Prisoner in the Gate-House, to Be Exhibited According to the Records of the City of Canterbury, in Order to Her Trial at the Sessions-House in the Old Bailey. With the Confession of the Witnesses and Her Father in Law, Touching Her Strange Pranks and Unheard of Designs. As Also a True Narrative of Her Proceedings since the 25<sup>th</sup> Day of March Last, to the Time of the Contract of Marriage, betwixt This Rare Inchantress, and That Worthy Gentleman Mr. Carlton*, Wing A3805

B., F., *Vercingetorixa: Or, The Germane Princess Reduc'd to an English Habit*, Wing B65

Carleton, John, *The Replication, Or Certain Vindictory Depositions*, Wing C585A

———, *The Ultimium Vale of John Carleton, of the Middle Temple, London, Gent. Being A true Description of the Passages of that Grand Imposter, Late a Pretended Germane-Lady*, Wing C586

Carleton, Mary, *An Historical Narrative of the German Princess, containing All material Passages, from her first Arrivall at Graves-end, the 30<sup>th</sup> of March last past, untill she was discharged from her Imprisonment, June the Sixth instant. Wherein also is mentioned, Sundry private Matters, between Mr. John Carlton, and others, and the said Princess: Not yet Published. Together with a brief and notable Story of Billing the Brick-Layer, one of her pretended Husbands, coming to New-Gate, and demanding of the Keeper her Deliverance, on Monday the Eighth instant*, Wing H2106

———, *The Case of Madam Mary Carleton, Lately stiled The German Princess, Truly Stated*, Wing C586A