

Virgin or Wife?

St Dorothy's Legend on the Late Restoration Stage

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ABSTRACT

Although the early modern and the Restoration periods in England mark two distinct theatrical traditions, the production of English Restoration playwrights was to a great extent characterized by a conscious reliance on the legacy of their early modern precursors, which resulted in the high number of adaptations of old plays written and staged well into the 18th century. The canons of the two dramatic traditions are, thus, intertwined, and their parallel study provides valuable insight into the then dramatic conventions and the development of English drama in general. The present paper analyses the late Restoration adaptation *Injured Virtue, or The Virgin Martyr* (1714) by Benjamin Griffin and compares it with its early modern source, the tragedy *The Virgin Martyr* (1620) by Philip Massinger and Thomas Dekker. After addressing Griffin's motives for choosing this particular Jacobean play, the paper discusses the most significant differences between the two texts and argues that Griffin's alterations in the list of dramatis personae and his rhetorical transformation of the play's main protagonists (especially that of the story's heroine, St Dorothy) lead to the inevitable conclusion that, with the two periods in questions and their dramatic conventions being so different, not every Restoration adaptation managed to translate the early modern material successfully.

KEYWORDS

early modern and Restoration drama, adaptation, theatre, Benjamin Griffin, Philip Massinger, Thomas Dekker, St Dorothy, martyr, comedy of manners, dramatic decorum, rhetorical convention

English Restoration playwrights owe much to their early modern forerunners whose influence was interrupted neither by the Civil War, nor by the Interregnum in the 1640s and 1650s. The early phase of the Restoration, especially, had been characterized by staging adaptations of the pre-war repertoire. Besides pieces modelled on French and Spanish sources, early Restoration playwrights based their plays on their English predecessors, most frequently on Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, William Shakespeare, and Ben Jonson (in this order of preference). Even though the main period of staging Renaissance adaptations falls between 1660 and 1700,¹ the practice had never been entirely abandoned, and plays by early modern authors continued to be staged well into the 18th century. This was also the case of the Jacobean tragedy about St Dorothy, *The Virgin Martyr* (1620), by Philip Massinger and Thomas Dekker, which the early 18th-century actor and minor playwright Benjamin Griffin (1680–1740) adapted in 1714 and published a year later under the title *Injured Virtue, or The Virgin Martyr*. As Griffin did not attempt to conceal his source and remained extremely faithful to the original (to the point of including passages of the Massinger and Dekker play verbatim), his debt to his Jacobean predecessors is obvious and substantial. Nevertheless, the almost hundred-year chasm of historical and cultural change between the two texts proved to be too great to overcome. This paper compares and contrasts the two related tragedies in the context of the development in dramatic taste which occurred between the Renaissance and Restoration periods.

1 Sandra Clark, "Shakespeare and Other Adaptations," in *A Companion to Restoration Drama* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), 275.

It should be said beforehand that the name of Benjamin Griffin cannot be found on any list of prominent Restoration playwrights. On the contrary, after having left his apprenticeship as a glazier and having joined a company of strolling actors, Griffin only temporarily tried his luck as an author.² The tragedy *Injured Virtue*, which was “the first time he ever trail'd a Pen”³ and which is recorded to have been staged twice in 1714, was by no means the start of a successful career.⁴ Indeed, as Thomas Betterton's *The History of the English Stage* (1741) concludes, “[b]y mistaking his Talents he attempted to commence Dramatic-Poet, by vamping up an old Play or 2 [sic] of Massinger and Dekker and scribbling a few farces, all which met with the deserved Contempt of such Trifling Performances”⁵ Although he was not exactly a dramatic wit, Griffin became famous as a comedy actor and appeared in numerous popular pieces: during his engagement at the Lincoln's Inn Field Theatre (1715–1721), he played Polonius in *Hamlet*, Gripe in Susanna Centlivre's *The Busybody* or Shylock in the Shakespearean adaptation *The Jew of Venice*; and even though his subsequent career at Drury Lane (1721–1740) was later marked by financial hardship, he starred even there, for instance as Sir Politick in Ben Jonson's *Volpone*, Peachum in John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* or Tribulation in Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist*.⁶ His laudatory obituary in 1740 remembers him as “a celebrated comedian” and another record seven years later gives poetic credit to his acting skills: “While Griffin liv'd the British Stage could boast / What France longe since in her *Moliere* had lost”.⁷ In short, although not an established author himself, Griffin must have known very well the rhetoric and dramatic conventions of late Restoration drama, which naturally shaped his own dramatic projects.

Even though the tragedy *Injured Virtue* is not notable for its dramatic quality, it is worth studying with regard to its Jacobean source. The motives for choosing Massinger and Dekker's play for an adaptation seem to be quite understandable. As a successor of Shakespeare and Fletcher in the position of the leading playwright of The King's Men, Philip Massinger enjoyed considerable popularity in his days, which, to a certain degree, survived even during the years of the silence of London theatres. A poem from a collection of songs entitled *Choyce Drollery: songs and sonnets*, first published during the Interregnum in 1657 and reprinted in 1661, places Massinger side by side the above-mentioned Renaissance authors, whose plays were frequently revived after 1660:

One night the great Apollo pleas'd with Ben,
Made the odde number of the Muses ten;

- 2 Philip H. Highfill, Kalman A. Burnim, and Edward A. Langhans, *A Bibliographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers & Other Stage Personnel in London, 1660–1800* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978), 364.
- 3 Griffin, *Injured Virtue, or The Virgin Martyr*, Prologue, sig. [A7v].
- 4 Benjamin Griffin, *Injured Virtue, or The Virgin Martyr* (London: J. Roberts, 1715), Prologue, sig. [Av7].
- 5 As quoted in Highfill, Burnim, and Langhans, *A Bibliographical Dictionary*, 365. Among the “few farces” were, for instance, *Love in a Sack* (1715) and *The Humours of Purgatory* (1716). Griffin probably finished his short dramatic career with *Whig and Tory* (1720), which is an adaptation of John Fletcher and William Rowley's comedy *The Maid in the Mill* (1623). (For a discussion of Griffin's *Whig and Tory* in the context of early 18th century English politics, see Krajník 2019).
- 6 Highfill, Burnim, and Langhans, *A Bibliographical Dictionary*, 365–67. See Peter van Bleek's 1738 painting of Act 3, Scene 2 from *The Alchemist*, where Griffin is immortalized in the character of Tribulation next to his colleague Benjamin Johnson playing Ananias.
- 7 As quoted in Highfill, Burnim, and Langhan, *A Bibliographical Dictionary*, 367–368.

The fluent Fletcher, Beaumont rich in sense,
 In Compliment and Courtship quintessence;
 Ingenious Shakespeare, Massinger that knowes
 The strength of Plot to write in verse and prose [.]⁸

Massinger's Restoration credit is also attested by the record of his plays staged during this era. His comedy *The Guardian* (1633) was "often acted at a private house in Black Fryars, by the King's Servants, 1665";⁹ the tragicomedy *The Bondman* (1634) was one of the few pieces in the possession of the Duke's Company at the reopening of the theatres¹⁰ and, together with another of Massinger's tragedies, *The Roman Actor* (1626), was performed in 1660 by the leading actor Thomas Betterton.¹¹ *The Virgin Martyr* was also revived after the reopening of London theatres; the Restoration theatre enthusiast Samuel Pepys witnessed its performance in 1661 and 1668.¹² Sandra Clark argues that it was the heroic quality of Massinger's plays that ensured their early Restoration popularity, which even led some authors (Aphra Behn for instance) to occasional unacknowledged plagiarism of Massinger's texts.¹³ However, Massinger's influence was not only confined to the early Restoration period. For example, *The Bondman* remained on the stage until 1719 when it was adapted and played at Drury Lane under the title *Love and Liberty*.¹⁴

Griffin could have also been encouraged to choose a Massinger play by the recent success of playwright and the first editor of Shakespeare Nicholas Rowe, who was in 1715 appointed Poet Laureate of Great Britain (Griffin published *Injured Virtue* in the same year). Rowe established his reputation by an adaptation of Massinger and Nathan Field's play *The Fatal Dowry* (1632); indeed, his version titled *The Fair Penitent* (1702) became an immediate hit, later praised by Samuel Johnson as "one of the most pleasing tragedies on the stage."¹⁵ Griffin's decision to start his career by an adaptation of one of Massinger's plays seemed, therefore, a reasonable one. Why, of all Massinger's plays, Griffin opted for the old dramatization of the life of St Dorothy is a matter of speculation, though. Staging a play about a Catholic martyr was a remarkable occurrence even in the early modern period,¹⁶ and the Restoration era similarly embraced the secular focus of English drama. As it is often the case, pragmatic reasons were probably decisive: *The Virgin Martyr* was revived after 1660 but not adapted yet, and its third edition from 1661 was most likely still easily accessible to Griffin. Moreover, Griffin's decision to adapt a hagiographic story might have also been sentimentally influenced, as his father was a chaplain, which implies a strong Christian

9 Theophilus Cibber, *The Lives of the Poets of Great Britain and Ireland* (London: R. Griffiths, 1753), 100.

10 Clark, "Shakespeare and Other Adaptations," 274.

11 William Gifford, ed., *The Plays of Philip Massinger* (London: John Templeman and John Russel Smith, 1840), xxii.

12 Samuel Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, (London: G. Bell, 1923), Vols. 1–3, 322; *ibid.*, Vols. 7–8, 320;

13 Clark, "Shakespeare and Other Adaptations," 289.

14 Gifford, *The Plays of Philip Massinger*, 90.

15 Samuel Johnson, "Life of Nicholas Rowe," in *The Works of the English Poets with Prefaces* (London: J. Nichols, 1779), par. 7. Rowe's play *The Fair Penitent* (1702) remained in the repertoire of Restoration theatres well into the 18th century and was even translated into German and printed under the title *Die Büssende Schöne* in 1782 (see *Mannheimer Schaubühne*, Vol. 5).

16 Massinger and Dekker's motives for writing a play about a Catholic saint for their Protestant audiences has been a point of some scholarly discussion. One view argues that the authors intended to make a statement against the then topical threat from the Ottoman Empire (Degenhardt, "Catholic Martyrdom", 84–86); another perspective reads the play as either pro- or anti-Catholic in the context of Catholic oppression in early modern England (Thomas, *Shakespeare, Catholicism, and the Middle Ages*, 185–189).

family background.¹⁷ Be that as it may, the important fact is that Griffin produced a text which together with its Jacobean model allows us to compare the treatment of a unique theme in two distinct theatrical milieux.

The plot of Massinger and Dekker's tragedy is based on the legend of St Dorothy, a Christian martyr who was tortured and executed during the Diocletianic persecution of Christians (303 AD), supplemented by several new subplots. The noble lady Dorothea is courted by Antoninus (Griffin changed this name to Antonius in his adaptation), a local governor's son; however, she has secretly devoted herself to Christ and, therefore, refuses Antoninus's advances. Antoninus's love for the Christian maiden is discovered and they are both imprisoned by Artemia, the emperor's jealous daughter, who had in turn been previously declined by Antoninus. The local persecutor of Christians, Theophilus, is resolved to turn the adamant Dorothea pagan. He sends his two daughters to convert Dorothea, but, instead, they get converted themselves. The enraged Theophilus commits double filicide and Dorothea is sentenced to death. Dorothea dies a martyr and Antoninus, who, sick with love, embraces her faith, dies with her. The fifth act brings the final, miraculous twist in the play when Dorothea sends Theophilus fruit and flowers from the Paradise. The tragedy ends with Theophilus's conversion, after which he dies on a rack and becomes the second martyr of the story.

In his adaptation process, Griffin depended heavily on his source text, preserving both the five-act structure and the basic plot development of Massinger and Dekker's tragedy. He even adopted whole passages of the original text without alteration, effectively making his adaptation a collaborative patchwork of three authors. Nevertheless, the Restoration adaptor did deviate from his source in several aspects in order to abandon the Jacobean theatrical conventions and reshape the text in Restoration fashion.

The most apparent change concerns the list of *dramatis personae*. Even though some cuts probably originated in the limited cast available to Griffin (for instance, the original three kings enslaved and then graciously set free by Diocletian merge in Griffin's play into one king, Aurelius), other changes had various dramaturgical implications. The first noticeable change is the abolition of two allegorical characters, which were vital parts of the Jacobean tragedy. In *The Virgin Martyr*, Dorothea is attended by an angel, Angelo, and Theophilus by a devil, Harpax, whose role is two-folded. On the one hand, they are fully-fledged characters (disguised as servants, they move the plot forward, for example, when Harpax encourages Theophilus to kill his two daughters), and, on the other, they represent the eternal struggle between good and evil and symbolically conclude the play by announcing the victory of the angelic side:

Harpax. I am twice damn'd.
Angelo. Haste to thy place appointed, cursed fiend,
 In spite of hell this prisoner's not [thy] prey,
 'Tis I have won, thou that hast lost the day.¹⁸

From a diary entry of Samuel Pepys, who attended the revival of *The Virgin Martyr* on 27th of February 1668 at the Theatre Royal in Bridges Street (future Drury Lane Theatre), it is evident that the early Restoration staging featured allegorical characters, or at least the angel.

17 Highfill, Burnim and Langhans, *A Biographical Dictionary*, 364.

18 Philip Massinger and Thomas Dekker, *The Virgin Martyr: A Tragedy* (London: William Sheares, 1661), 78.

Pepys was impressed by the musical accompaniment of the tragedy and noted that “that which did please me beyond anything in the whole world was the wind-musique when the angel comes down, which is so sweet that it ravished me . . . [and] made me really sick, just as I have formerly been when in love with my wife”.¹⁹ This witness account, referring to the climax of the play, when an angel brings heavenly fruit and flowers to Theophilus, also provides us with information about the Restoration staging reality. First, it demonstrates the prominent musicality of Restoration performances, whose rich musical accompaniment was typical of the period dominated by opera. Second, even though the Theatre Royal in Bridges Street did not yet stage spectacles with the help of modern flying machinery (as opposed to its successor in Drury Lane, which opened in 1674),²⁰ Pepys’s wording that the angel “comes down” suggests that an attempt at flying was probably ventured. Such a spectacular stage effect had already been in use during the Renaissance period but employed even more so in the era of modern illusory Baroque theatres in the late 17th century. Early Restoration theatre managers apparently recognized the spectacular potential in the climax scene of *The Virgin Martyr*.

Griffin did not incorporate the angel or the devil in his adaptation, possibly finding the use of allegorical figures obsolete, and re delegated their functions to other characters instead. He replaced the character of Angelo with Dorothea’s servant Hellena – a move prompted either by a spare actress available in the company or by the desire to put more actresses on stage in line with the vogue of the time (though Hellena has only one entrance in the play as the majority of the angel’s entrances were cut). In the final miracle scene, it is not the angel but Dorothea herself who descends from the Paradise. More interesting is Griffin’s replacement of the devil-figure, as he took the Jacobean character of Sapritius, Antoninus’s severe father and city governor, and merged him with the devilish Harpax. It is, therefore, Sapritius who in Griffin’s play urges Theophilus to cruelty towards Christians and the murder of his daughters (“See, here’s my dagger, you have got another, / And Hands enough to do the Work at once”²¹). This compensation strategy, however, failed for the most powerful entrance of the Jacobean devil. In act five, Harpax at first plays a hide-and-seek game with his sinner. Ultimately, he then enters the stage “in a fearful shape, fire flashing out of [Theophilus’s] study”, and, proclaiming himself to be Theophilus’s “Master”, who “hand in hand hath led thee to thy hell”, tries to hinder Theophilus from converting to Christianity.²² Although Griffin’s Sapritius might assume a darker personality and effectively replace Harpax on several occasions, a character who would “rather cease to live, than lose” his child and even commits suicide out of grief for his deceased son to subsequently return as a devilish ghost while shouting “I’ll hang thy tortured Soul, I am Sapritius” is somewhat forced.²³

Another significant alteration which changed the character of Griffin’s adaptation is the disposal of clown figures. In accordance with the convention of the time, the Jacobean tragedy *The Virgin Martyr* features a comical subplot, in which two of Dorothea’s treacherous servants,

19 Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, Vols. 7–8, 320.

20 Lyndsey Bakewell, *Changing Scenes and Flying Machines: A Re-examination of Spectacle and the Spectacular in Restoration Theatre* (Loughborough University, 2018), 103.

21 Griffin, *Injured Virtue, or The Virgin Martyr*, 43.

22 Massinger and Dekker, *The Virgin Martyr: A Tragedy*, 69.

23 Griffin, *Injured Virtue, or The Virgin Martyr*, 46, 66.

Spungius and Hircius, pretend to accept their mistress's faith, but ultimately betray her to the Roman authorities. In the meantime, they joke about the advantage of religious flexibility:

- Spungius.* I see no remedy, fellow Hircius, but that thou and I must be half Pagans and half Christians; for we know very fools that are Christians.
Hircius. Right: the quarters of Christians are good for nothing, but to feed Crowses.
Spungius. . . . I am resolved to have an Infidels heart, though in shew I carry a Christian face.²⁴

Griffin readily disposed of the two Jacobean rogues in his version of the play, which resulted in the omission of three original scenes of comic relief (2.1, 3.3, 4.2). The blasphemous humour of the clowns quoted above might be one of the main motives for leaving them out. In his prologue, Griffin explains that the aim of his play is to “show you here, a Moral Play to Night” and to oppose the “Injustice” of those who “make our Plays useless and profane /And all our Scenes immoral, lewd and vain”.²⁵ Whether he could still have in mind the public quarrel of the late 1690s, when Jeremy Collier's pamphlet *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* (1698) launched a heated discussion about the immorality of the English stage, is hard to say. William Congreve's argument in defence against Collier's attack that “the business of Comedy is to delight, as well as to instruct”²⁶ is in any case repeated at the beginning of Griffin's prologue, where the author claims his play will be “Instructive to your Ears and pleasing to your Eyes”.²⁷ Although this well-known maxim by Horace was most likely used merely as a conventional formula, Griffin's avoidance of jokes about religion should be viewed in the light of the then recent dispute over the morality of English theatre. Griffin's plan to prove that a play can indeed “punish Vice, and Give to Virtue Praise” lends more gravity to his decision to adapt a play about Christian martyrdom.²⁸ As will become evident, however, the choice of an exemplary topic was not a guarantee of Griffin's success.

Griffin's abolition of the scenes with comic relief should, thus, be seen as a result of his wish to comply with the neoclassical decorum prevalent at the time. It also demonstrates that every theatrical tradition has its own approach to humour. Whereas the clown repertoire of early modern theatre was rich (ranging from silly buffoons in situational slapstick sketches to the wise fools of Shakespeare) and the playwrights would often add independent comical subplots even to tragedies, the era of Restoration was more concerned with the dramatic decorum and cast clowns predominantly in comedies (often as the stereotyped conceited fops). Genest's *Some Account of the English stage, from the Restoration in 1660 to 1830* (1832) retrospectively hints at the change of taste when he in passing records:

24 Massinger and Dekker, *The Virgin Martyr: A Tragedy*, 16.

25 Griffin, *Injured Virtue, or The Virgin Martyr*, Prologue, sig. [A7v]-[A8r].

26 As quoted in Michael Corder, “Playwright versus Priest: Profanity and the Wit of Restoration Comedy,” in *The Cambridge Companion to English Restoration Theatre*, 2000), 216.

27 Griffin, *Injured Virtue, or The Virgin Martyr*, Prologue, sig. [A7r].

28 Griffin, *Injured Virtue, or The Virgin Martyr*, Prologue, sig. [A8v]. Griffin alludes to the theme of virtue and his play's potential to promote it also with a Latin motto on the front page of the quarto: *comedia reacta si mente legatur – constabit nulli posse nocere*. It is a slightly altered quote from Ovid's *Tristia*, Book II, and can be translated as “a play read with a virtuous mind, it'll be established nothing of mine will harm” (adjusted from the English translation of Ovid's *Tristia* by A.S. Kline).

27. [February 1668] *Virgin Martyr* revived – this T. was written by Massinger and Dekker – it is on the whole a good play – some parts of it are very finely written – others badly – the comic characters of Hircius and Spungius have but little humour [.]²⁹

Even early Restoration adaptations evince the profound shift in the perception of genres and dramatic decorum, which had taken place since the closure of theatres. In Nahum Tate's *The History of King Lear* (1681), which replaced Shakespeare's version for more than a century and a half, the adaptor, likewise, abolished the fool and even changed the ending of the play so that Cordelia is happily reunited with her father and marries Edgar.³⁰ Tate explains in his dedication that he intended to

rectify what was wanting in the Regularity and Probability of the Tale, which was to run through the whole, *A Love betwixt Edgar and Cordelia*, that never chang'd word with each other in the Original. This renders *Cordelia's* Indifference and her Father's passion in the first scene probable. . . . This method necessarily threw me on making the Tale conclude in a Success to the innocent distress Persons; Otherwise I must have incumbred the Stage with dead Bodies, which Conduct makes many Tragedies conclude with unseasonable Jests.³¹

Tate's account illustrates that Griffin wrote in a dramatic tradition based on the belief in strict poetic justice. That is the reason why he also changed the outcome of his Jacobean source. In accordance with the medieval legend, Saint Dorothy and Theophilus are both executed. Nonetheless, whilst the Jacobean Theophilus ruthlessly kills his two daughters on stage, the late Restoration Theophilus "want[s] the Will" and commands a captain to throw "These two Instruments of Hell", that is, his daughters, off "the stupendious Cliff" to their "Eternal Ruin".³² The captain, however, does not comply and ultimately ensures the final reunion and reconciliation of the family. Additionally, the fact that Dorothea's execution is only reported in the Griffin adaptation, in contrast to *The Virgin Martyr* where the saint's "head [is] struck off" on stage,³³ similarly exemplifies Restoration dramatic sensitivity about the "unseasonable" amount of "dead Bodies" (to use Tate's words) on the stage and the shift in the perception of the horrid since the early modern period.

Except for alternations stemming from abolition, merging or the introduction of new characters, Griffin's tragedy represents a significant rhetorical departure from the Jacobean model. The shift is most visible in Dorothea's language, which consists of a mixture of original passages and Griffin's authorial lines, providing a clear sign that we are no longer in a Renaissance drama. Initially, it seems that Griffin's Dorothea generally adopts the rhetoric of her Jacobean forerunner and conveys the impression of a pious, virtuous and devoted martyr known from the medieval hagiographic tradition.³⁴ This, together with Griffin's frequent textual reliance on his Jacobean

29 John Genest, *Some Account of the English Stage, from the Restoration in 1660 to 1830* (Bath: Carrington, 1832), 80.

30 Clark, "Shakespeare and Other Adaptations," 278.

31 As quoted in Clark, "Shakespeare and Other Adaptations," 278.

32 Griffin, *Injured Virtue, or The Virgin Martyr*, 43–44.

33 Massinger and Dekker, *The Virgin Martyr: A Tragedy*, 65.

34 For a more detailed analysis of Massinger and Dekker's Dorothea and her connection to the medieval hagiographic tradition, see the author's diploma thesis (Mikyšková, "Philip Massinger and Thomas Dekker's *The Virgin Martyr* in the Hands of German Comoedianten", Masaryk University Brno, 2018, 24–33).

source, is noticeable, for instance, in a moment when Dorothea refuses her suitor's courtship and contrasts him with her heavenly groom:

Dorothea. Sir, for your fortunes were they mines of Gold,
He that I love is richer; and for worth
You are to him lower then any slave
Is to a Monarch. [Massinger and Dekker]³⁵

Dorothea. Sir, for your fortunes, were they Mines of Gold,
My Love is placed upon an Object richer;
And for your Worth, your Person is to him
Lower than any Slave is to a Monarch. [Griffin]³⁶

Nevertheless, Dorothea's pious rhetoric, which is introduced by her charitable conduct towards some prisoners in Act Two of Massinger and Dekker's play and characterized by her often-mentioned Christian devotion, is in Griffin on various occasions interrupted by an utterance which is more reminiscent of a self-confident, flirtatious heroine from the comedy of manners, a genre massively popular between the 1670s and 1690s but still staged in Griffin's time. When confronted with Antonius's courtship, the Restoration saint replies:

Dorothea. Men learn to flatter and betray our Sex,
almost as soon as they are taught to speak,
so natural is Deceit even to the youngest:
But do not think a Lover's idle Language
Can force Belief in one that knows his Arts,
His Passions, Presentations, Vows and Sighs,
And all his foolish Train of Madmen's Action.³⁷

Although the Restoration Dorothea does defend her chastity until the very end and technically lives up to her role of a Christian female saint, her implied knowledge of the arts of "a lover's idle language" sharply contrasts with the aura of purity and innocence that surrounds her Jacobean model. Similarly, when the refused Antonius asks (echoing almost verbatim his Jacobean counterpart), "How can there be, / In such a noble Casket . . . a Heart so flinty hard"³⁸ their dialogue clearly goes in the direction of a word play of the Restoration sex comedy, whose tone Allardyce Nicoll aptly describes as "aristocratic licentiousness"³⁹:

Dorothea. O there are many, very many Arts,
Your sex employs to undermine our Virtue,
Baffle our Virgin Chastity and make us
The easy Prey to you unlawful Passions.

Antonius. Can you suspect?
Let me profess and vow.

35 Massinger and Dekker, *The Virgin Martyr: A Tragedy*, 26–27.

36 Griffin, *Injured Virtue, or The Virgin Martyr*, 27.

37 Griffin, *Injured Virtue, or The Virgin Martyr*, 25.

38 Griffin, *Injured Virtue, or The Virgin Martyr*, 26.

39 As quoted in Clark, "Shakespeare and Other Adaptations," 284.

Dorothea. I have often heard,
A Lover's Protestations are but Wind,
Made to disguise the Baseness of his Purpose.⁴⁰

The character of Griffin's Dorothea switches repeatedly between these two registers; a closer look shows that her language is situation-bound. When she converts the two pagan sisters in Act Three, she resumes her saint's role, but in her interactions with Antonius, the Restoration-comedy-like heroine surfaces. Even though Griffin strived to preserve the original gravity of the saint's sacrifice and piety, his equivocal treatment of Dorothea makes the play's moral very ambiguous. Dorothea's claim that she would accept Antonius's "chaste and honest Love" were it not "for the Difference our Religion made / Which has deny'd what both of us desired" again undermines her prescribed devotion to Christ.⁴¹ Moreover, the Jacobean and late Restoration saints differ in their last words. The Jacobean Dorothea's final message, "Say this of Dorothea, with wet eyes, / She liv'd a Virgin, and a Virgin dies"⁴² announces the maiden's victory and emphasizes the female principle that grants her access to the Paradise. Griffin's saint, however, slightly changes this line to "Of Dorothea say, with watery eyes, / She liv'd a virgin, and a Martyr dies", suggesting that her martyrdom is more significant than her chastity for the moral framework of the story. What is more important is the fact that last words of the Restoration saint belong to Antonius: "And now a certain, last Farewel, my Love / Till we again shall meet / In yon bright Realm above"⁴³ Rather than stressing the Christian message of the play, the last thoughts of Griffin's Dorothea are devoted to her earthly lover, which yet again corrupts the Jacobean source and shifts it into the Restoration love-talk rhetoric.

Other characters occasionally utter Griffin's authorial lines as well, adhering to the rhetorical conventions of Restoration comedy of manners, often when a comment on the vices of the opposite sex can be made. For example, after Antonius declines the marriage offer by the Emperor's daughter Artemia, he bemoans the blasted hopes for his further social promotion, saying that his epitaph shall be: "This is that Soldier's Tomb that died a Woman's Slave"⁴⁴ Even more aggressively, Sapritius at one point remarks that it is "no easy task / To change the Mind of foolish obstinate Woman. / Perverseness is inherent to the Sex"⁴⁵ and later cries: "A Woman! What occasion for a Woman? That sex were never esteem'd for Physick, / Than they were despis'd for Mischief"⁴⁶

Both *The Virgin Martyr* and the later *Injured Virtue* are set in the Roman province of Cappadocia, concerned with the conflict between the ruling Pagans and the persecuted Christians, and redeemed by the sacrifice of noble Dorothea. Nevertheless, Griffin's adaptation by its rhetoric resembles the late 17th-century English conversation comedy, such as *The Provoked Wife* (1697), where the stakes in the conflict fought between the two sexes in the English setting are ludicrously lower.

40 Griffin, *Injured Virtue, or The Virgin Martyr*, 26.

41 Griffin, *Injured Virtue, or The Virgin Martyr*, 58.

42 Massinger and Dekker, *The Virgin Martyr: A Tragedy*, 65.

43 Griffin, *Injured Virtue, or The Virgin Martyr*, 59.

44 Griffin, *Injured Virtue, or The Virgin Martyr*, 18.

45 Griffin, *Injured Virtue, or The Virgin Martyr*, 39.

46 Griffin, *Injured Virtue, or The Virgin Martyr*, 45.

Just like Griffin's Dorothea has two personalities, so does Griffin's Antonius. Whereas the Jacobean Antoninus slowly relinquishes his wooing efforts and gradually embraces Dorothea's faith, in Griffin's play, Antonius (whose status as a Christian-convert is rather unclear) turns into a moralizer. Possibly due to the change in the character of the audiences in the Restoration era, when theatre performances became a more middle- and upper-class matter and a general pastime for aristocratic classes, Antonius devotes time to preaching about the corruption of the court. He warns his friend Eumillius that "all Men are either Fools or Knaves" and advises him to "shun the Court, the Magick Circle" for he "never knew a wife or honest Man / But he was justled out, betray'd and ruin'd / By some designing, flattering, cozening Knave, / Which every Court abounds with".⁴⁷ Contrary to *The Virgin Martyr*, where the soul of Antoninus leaves his body at the moment of Dorothea's execution, symbolically marking their spiritual bond and the strength of Dorothea's faith, *The Injured Virtue* features Antonius, who, after a long monologue on the vices of the court, dies, Hamlet-like, in the arms of his friend.⁴⁸

Griffin's adaptation is strewn with references to virtue and morality. Starting with the title *Injured Virtue* and the author's intention, expressed in the Prologue, to "show you here, a Moral Play Tonight", the play continues with virtue being constantly referred to, threatened, mocked, defended, and eventually won.⁴⁹ However, the morality of Griffin's world is strikingly different from the moral framework of Massinger and Dekker's tragedy. Regardless of its scenes with blasphemous clowns, the Jacobean tragedy firmly adheres to the moral framework inherited from the hagiographic legends about Christian saints and features characters who are rhetorically consistent throughout the play. Griffin might have intended a similar effect with his adaptation for his late Restoration audiences, but his tendency to employ rhetorical conventions of the conversation comedies of his time made the moral profile of his characters highly contradictory, resulting in an inconsistent and peculiar mixture of dramatically incompatible devices.

It is undeniable that early modern playwrights shaped the English dramatic tradition for generations to come. The English stage has always reflected social and cultural changes in society, and the analysis of Benjamin Griffin's tragedy *Injured Virtue* shows that the Restoration period was no exception. Massinger and Dekker's *The Virgin Martyr* and Griffin's adaptation *Injured Virtue*, or *The Virgin Martyr* differ in multiple aspects. Besides changes introduced for practical reasons and the overall lesser dramatic quality of Griffin's play, *Injured Virtue* displays several alterations which testify to a prominent shift in dramatic taste that had occurred between the early modern and late Restoration periods. The two allegorical characters of the angel and devil, still linking the Jacobean drama to its medieval ancestry, disappear for their obsolescence. Griffin's unwillingness to show the violence of Dorothea's execution and the murder of Theophilus's daughters on stage points to

47 Griffin, *Injured Virtue, or The Virgin Martyr*, 47, 61.

48 There are two other moments which suggest Shakespeare's influence. In his effort to excuse his refusal of princess Artemia's hand, Antonius utters: "Dare I presume to embrace, where but to touch, / With an unhallow'd Hand would merit Death?" (Griffin, *Injured Virtue, or The Virgin Martyr*, 16–17), which is reminiscent of Romeo's "unworthiest hand" from the first line of his shared sonnet with Juliet (*Romeo and Juliet* 1.5.92). Another allusion to *Hamlet* comes in 5.1 when Theophilus's daughter Calista vows that she will never again recant her Christian faith and promises to scorn "all those Troubles Human Flesh is Heir to" (Griffin, *Injured Virtue, or the Virgin Martyr*, 75), which is a variant of Hamlet's "thousand natural shocks / That flesh is heir to" (*Hamlet* 3.1.61–62).

49 Griffin, *Injured Virtue, or The Virgin Martyr*, Prologue, sig. [A7v].

a shift in the perception of the horrid, whose open display was so typical of early modern theatre. The late Restoration sense for dramatic decorum is manifested in the disappearance of two Jacobean clowns, whose presence in the play would disrupt the then perception of the tragic genre and whose blasphemous humour would offend the late Restoration requirement for language decency when related to the topic of religion. Most importantly, the use of the rhetorical style characteristic of the clash between sexes in the Restoration conversation comedy substantially affected the moral message of Griffin's adaptation. Whereas the Jacobean tragedy tells a story about a female Christian martyr, whose typical traits of piety, passive endurance and innocence are based on the medieval concept of spiritual femininity, the late Restoration rendering mixes the image of a Christian female saint with an active, experienced heroine born from the tradition of Restoration gender politics. The result of Griffin's adaptation efforts is a peculiar, inconsistent mixture of medieval hagiographic conventions, Jacobean language and dramaturgy, and late Restoration comedy rhetoric. The mixed character of Griffin's tragedy is symptomatic of the tendency of early Restoration adaptations to come to terms with their early modern legacy while incorporating new conventions of their age. The play *Injured Virtue* demonstrates that the transition process was oftentimes far from simple.

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