

# Frances Sheridan

Maxwell Rabb

# Early Biography

Born in Dublin, Ireland - 1724

Daughter of Reverend Dr. Philip Chamberlain &  
Anastasia Whyte

Her mother died shortly after her birth

Youngest of five siblings

Three older brothers

Father believed that female literacy was  
“superfluous”

Secretly taught to read and write by her  
clergyman older brother



# Later Biography



Wrote first romance at the age of 15 (*Eugenia and Adelaide*) - Not published until 1791 after her death

Married Thomas Sheridan in 1743

Thomas Sheridan (1719? - 1788)- an Irish actor and educator

Sheridan's husband supported her writing and commentary - assisting with the circulation of her work - frequently, acted in her plays

Memoirs of Sidney Bidulph (2nd novel) encouraged and produced by Samuel Richardson, a close friend and supporter, that helped with the publication of Sheridan's works

After her first novel, she switched to theater for the rest of her life

Death Sept 26 1766 - short unknown illness

# Plays

The Discovery (1763)

The Dupe (1763)

A Trip to Bath (1765)



# Novels

Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph (1761)

The History of Nourjahad (1767)

Conclusion of the Memoirs (1767)

Eugenia and Adelaide (posthumous 1791)

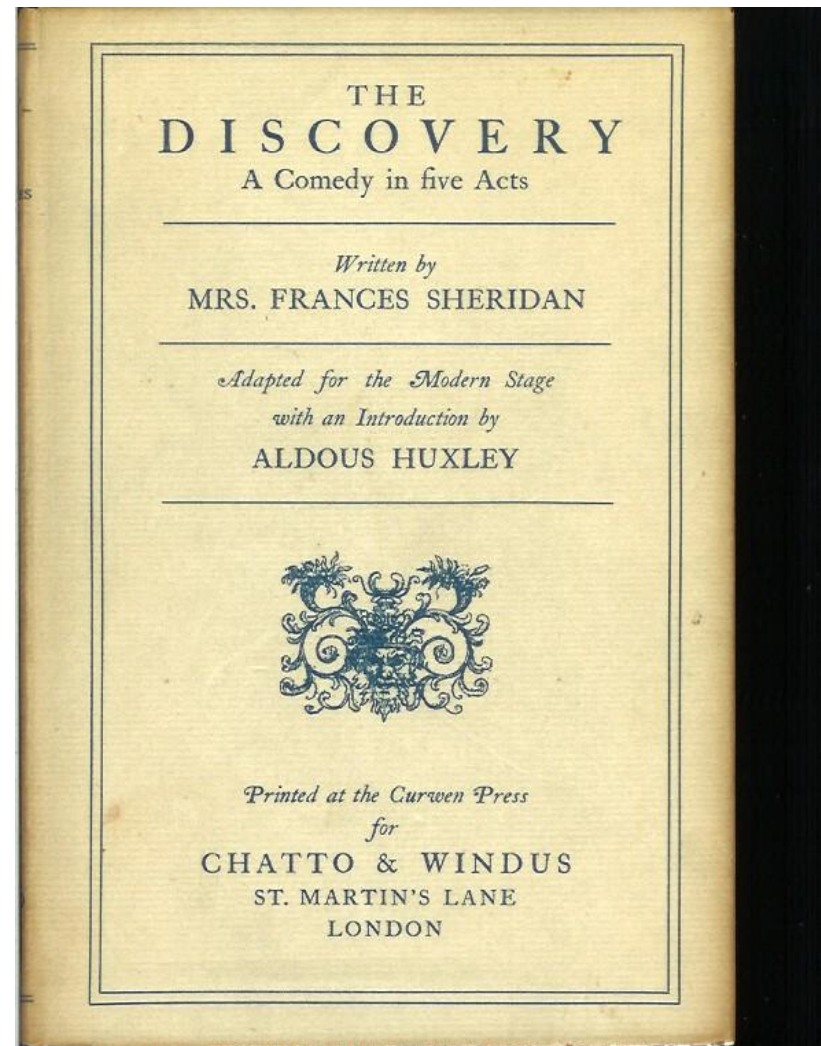
# The Discovery

Performed on 5 Feb 1763 by David Garrick's  
Company on Drury Lane

A comedy written as a subtle commentary on the  
social and political situation of women in the 18th  
century

Thomas Sheridan acted as the male lead - extremely  
successful performance and response

Rewritten and performed again in 1924 by Aldous  
Huxley



# The Discovery

17 nights of performance with good critical acclaim

A play about “a reformed rake”

Rake - n - a fashionable or stylish person with promiscuous habits

The play is a series of promiscuity, infidelity, flirtation, seduction, and complication in marriage and romance

central - “compliant” woman in control of a “brutal” man

“Lord Medway orders his daughter to marry the man of his choice, a scene in which he allows her to say hardly a word, emphatically conveys male fears, as the man in possession of complete autocratic power imagines what his daughter might say, given the chance. Such imagining defines male vulnerability” (Spacks)

Sheridan is underlining the weaknesses of hypermasculinity and the fragility of this patriarchal system

# The Discovery

Masculine Reform - the criticism of Lord Medway and the other male characters' behavior and control of women

the introspection that occurs throughout the play represents what Spack's calls a "fantasy" of change

The men become so obsessed on their masculinity and "manliness" that their status falters throughout the play

## Marriage

Lord Medway's demands the choice of his daughter's spouse juxtaposed by his request for his son's compliance

"Sir Harry Flutter, Lord Medway explains, treats his wife in the way that children treat small animals in their power, because he thinks such behavior"

A critique on treating women like property throughout the play - Sheridan's emphasis on this builds to create this sense of fear within the male characters that Spacks discusses

# The Discovery

“‘Manliness,’ in other words, constitutes an effort at self- protection for men vividly conscious of women's skill at dissembling, their association with rhetorical force, their capacity to undermine male power by talking or by sexual allure” (Spacks)

The Discovery is this sensibility

The ability to subvert men’s desire for control by taking advantage of their arrogance



# Bibliography

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