

Short Summary of *The Ladies of Castile* by Mercy Otis Warren

A metaphor for the American Revolution, this play begins amid an uprising in Spain against the rule of Charles V. On both sides, characters grapple with the cost of war, the need for revolution, tyranny, honor, and forbidden love. This is the most feminist of Ms. Warren's plays, contrasting the reaction of two women to the deaths of their liberty-loving husbands.

Selections from *The Ladies of Castile*

Act II, Scene I

DONNA MARIA

Yet justice' sword can never be resheath'd,
'Till Charles is taught to know we will be free;
And learns the duty that a monarch owes,
To heaven---the people---and the rights of man.
Let him restore the liberties of Spain---
Dismiss the robbers that arrest his ear---
Those pension'd plunderers that rudely seize
What nature gave, and what our fathers won.
...

DONNA LOUISA

Had I thy firmness, yet my heart would bleed
To see my country torn by civil feuds.
Each hero hurls a javelin at the breast
His heart reveres, and friendship's soul recoils
When the bold veteran urges home the blow,
To pierce the man he venerates and loves;
While the brave patriot parries back the shaft
Against a life that virtue's self would save.

DONNA MARIA

This sad necessity---this painful strife,
Should reunite the citizens of Spain;
And rouse each languid arm with tenfold zeal
To point the thunder at a tyrant's head,
Ere yet the lingering mind indignant sinks,
Debas'd and trembling at a despot's frown.
Rather let cities that support his reign,
Like Torbolatan yesterday reduc'd,
Be storm'd and sack'd before tomorrow's dawn;

And thus be taught the weakness of the mind
That dare a moment balance in the scale,
A crown for kings---with liberty to man.

Act II, Scene III

DON FRANCIS

When honour calls, and justice wields the sword,
True virtue spares, and clemency forgives;
But when a fierce, tyrannic lust of sway,
Deforms the soul, and blots out nature's stamp,
The wolf, or tyger, prowling for his prey,
Is less a savage than the monster man.

Act III, Scene I

DONNA LOUISA

My bleeding heart anticipates my fate:
Oh! what a bubble 'tis ye glory call---
Mistaken name---a phantom of the brain,
That leads the hero on to leap the bounds
Of every social tie---till blood---till death,
Spreads horror over nature's frightened face:---
Ambition rears his fierce and furious fang---
In grizly tresses jealousy attends
'Till discord reigns, and civil fury burns,
And arms the son against a father's life,
Or plants a poignard in a dearer hart.

Act III, Scene III

DON JUAN DE PADILLA

Hah!---is Francis made the fickle sport of fortune?
If victory declares on freedom's side,
My arm shall aid in all his just demands.
Ere Ferdinand had seiz'd the neighbouring crowns,
He form'd a system to easlave mankind:
But Charles improves on his despotic plan;
Yet one campaign, one signal victory gain'd,

May shake the tyrant from his triple throne,
And once again, o'er the European world,
Relight the torch by tyranny obscur'd.
But if his cruel sword at last prevails,
Europe will bleed from Tagus to the Scheld,
Beneath his barb'rous persecuting race.
We then must strike one bold decisive blow;
The rights of man were rescu'd by the sword,
From Nimrod down to Cæsar or to Charles---
Haste on this moment and rejoin the troops.

Act IV, Scene V

DONNA MARIA

Is sentence past---irrevocably past---
Then try the courage of a female heart,
And let me die with thee---the treasons I avow---
The crime is mine:---I can as bravely die,
As e'er a Grecian, or a Roman dame---
And smile at Portia's celebrated feat,
Who drew her blood to worm a secret out:---
I'll kiss the glittering ax and hug the shroud
That wraps me ever from a servile world.

DONNA MARIA

Oh! harsh and cruel sound---adieu!---forever---
He's gone-----
And heav'n's broad eye beholds the fatal stroke,
And thunders vengeance from the luring skies.

(A solemn pause)

When his great soul ascends the broad expanse,
Let angels guard him through the widen'd dome.
But shall Maria shroud herself in grief,
And sink beneath life's disappointed hopes,
A feeble victim to her own despair?---
A soul, inspir'd by freedom's genial warmth,
Expands---grows firm---and by resistance, strong:

The most successful prince that offers life,
And bids me live upon ignoble terms,
Shall learn from me that virtue seldom fears.---
Death kindly opes a thousand friendly gates,
And freedom waits to guard her votaries through.

Act V, Scene I

DONNA MARIA

She stoop'd, and dip'd her target in the gore
That copious rush'd from noble Juan's wounds.
'Tis the cement, she cry'd, in stronger league
To bind the liberal and unite the brave.
And here, before the soldiers and the Cortes,
In presence of the eternal King, I swear,
Most solemnly I bind my free born soul,
Ere I will live a slave, and kiss the hand
That o'er my country clanks a servile chain,
I'll light the towers, and perish in the flames,
And smile and triumph in the general wreck.
Come, shew one sample of heroic worth,
Ere ancient Spain, the glory of the west,
Bends abject down---by all the nations scorn'd:---
Secure the city---barricade the gates,
And meet me arm'd with all the faithful bands:
I'll head the troops, and mount the prancing steed;
The courser guide, and vengeance pour along
Amidst the ranks, and teach the slaves of Charles
Not Semiramis' or Zenobia's fame
Outstrips the glory of Maria's name.

Full text of [The Ladies of Castille](#)

Writer may also be interested in using source material / text from Mercy Otis Warren's *The Adulateur* ([text](#)) & *The Defeat* ([text](#)).