Colette O'Niel: a season in repertory

After the death of Lady Constance Malleson, the London *Evening Standard* published a letter from me extolling her. I wrote it after reading reviews of *The Life of Bertrand Russell*, most of which virtually ignored Colette in favour of Lady Ottoline Morrell; and the *Standard* alone recalled that Lady Constance had once been active in the theatre. My letter read:

> Although the stage name was misspelt, Antonia Fraser did well to remind us--unlike many reviewers of *The Life of Bertrand Russell* --that BR's long-enduring love, Lady Constance Malleson, was once a hardworking professional actress.
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> It is nearly half a century since Colette O'Niel trod the stage, but she was one of the most magnetically romantic actresses of her own or any other time. As she died recently, it may be worth noting that in London she understudied Yvonne Arnaud; played a rep season at Brixton; moved to the West End in Sacha Guitry's *Deburau*, with Ivor Novello; appeared as Helen of Troy in Gilbert Murray's translation of *The Trojan Women*, with Sybil Thorndike at the Old Vic; was the Quaker Widow in John Drinkwater's *Abraham Lincoln*; and nobly supported Claude Rains in Georg Kaiser's then daring Expressionist play, *From Morn to Midnight*. She also acted at the Lyceum, and in Sunday night plays by Wycherley, Shelley, Masefield and Miles Malleson. The last-named published a three-act play, *Youth*, which is dedicated to her, but she did not appear in it.
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> Colette O'Niel's last appearances in Britain were at Exeter, in Ashley Dukes' *The Man With a Load of Mischief*, and on Sir Frank Benson's farewell tour, when she played Portia, Olivia, Lady Teazle, Lydia Languish, and Kate Hardcastle, in repertory.

John G. Slater's striking obituary in *Russell* assesses her acting career as short-lived, and something of a near-disaster, based on her own moody self-estimate as "a provincial actress" in a relevant passage in her first autobiography. In fact, she acted for 15 years, which is not a particularly short period in the theatre; and it so happens that, at the apparent crisis of that career to which the autobiography refers, I was privileged to see her perform in eight different plays. I was so impressed by her presence, personality and skill that I became spellbound, and her influence lingers still. To its magnetic effect on my young life I owe much.

Some time before first seeing her I had observed the name Colette O'Niel on a large poster near a railway-crossing which luridly advertised a touring melodrama called *The Woman in the Case*, then performing at the Hull Alexandra Theatre. But the name attracted only because a schoolmate bore the name Neil Collet, and the inversion amused me.

One day in the autumn of 1925 a chance encounter with a former school Prefect led to our early visit to see the newly formed Hull Little Theatre company. The first play was to be C.K. Munro's recent London success, *At Mrs. Beam's*. This thespian group had been formed in 1924 by local enthusiasts determined to bring serious theatre to a town then totally dependent on the touring system. The first season was successful, and the Hull amateurs were ambitious. They now embarked on a ten-week season with a professional producer, A.R. Whatmore, a young stage designer of genius, and five professional actors who formed the nucleus of an otherwise still amateur company.

The leading man was Colin Clive. Colette O'Niel (after a highly successful repertory season at Plymouth) was leading lady; and the young and very beautiful Evelyn Taylor the ingénue; with handsome J. Kerslake Harbord as juvenile lead, Roland Culver (then 24) as first character man, and local players such as Mrs. James Downs, Olga Martin, Hännchen Drasdo, Edgar Appleton, Dorothy Nichol and Audrey Dannatt forming an excellent and enterprising team. One or two professional "guest" artists arrived during the season for special plays.

Whatever Colette may have felt about her status as "a provincial actress" towards the end of the Hull season, there is no doubt that she undertook the engagement with enthusiasm. In *After Ten Years* she declares categorically: "I would have gone up to Hull for any one of those parts. The prospect of playing all of them filled me with delight."

Yet her first part was small. A few days before *At Mrs. Beam's*, I was walking in the street when a woman passed by, and strode on ahead. She carried a paper bag, wore a handsome leopard skin coat and coloured turban, and was obviously a person of consequence: haughty, beautiful, slightly sinister perhaps, but imperious, graceful, hypnotic. I had no idea who the stranger was, but was reminded of some women I had seen early one Saturday evening in the town's smart tearoom. They were actresses resting between the matinée and evening performances of the touring musical play, *Chu Chin Chow*--and they, too, wore turbans, eyeshadow, waved long cigarette-holders, and stared at one in a penetrating, not to say exotic way, above the teacups. The stranger was, I decided, "a theatrical".

As the curtain rose on *At Mrs. Beam's*, I glanced at the programme. It revealed that Colette O'Niel was indeed in the company, but in the small

part of Miss Cheezle, a disgruntled old lady, cantankerous but comical, with oddly tetchy lines about "a marquis's daughter". The actress was unrecognizable; but the character was totally convincing.

A.R. Whatmore's production and the company were quite unforgettable in this play, and a young Press critic said to me, "Each time the curtain rises, it is like a new dawn over this town". Years later, in his own autobiography[1], he described the company as "a bundle of temperaments, explosive as an arsenal". And there was indeed inexplicable magic--or genius--in the air at every performance, even on Monday "popular" nights, when seats were half-price.

Colette herself has described the hard, rewarding work; the weekly miracles achieved by Eric Hiller in transforming a Devonshire garden into the lamplit deck of a Thames houseboat or a claustophobic Norwegian fjord, overnight; the excellence of the teamwork; the remarkable fusion of professional and amateur. There is much that could be written about that extraordinary company; a chronicle which may yet astonish, and make theatre and cinema history.

At Mrs. Beam's projected a new world for those of us who were young then: one utterly different from daily life or the commercial theatre. I had seen several famous artists on tour or "prior to London" --Mrs Patrick Campbell, Fred and Adèle Astaire, Fred Terry and Julia Neilson, Yvonne Arnaud, Sir Martin Harvey, Jack Buchanan and June in musical comedy, Phyllis Monkman, Godfrey Tearle and lesser West End luminaries. But the comfortable intimacy of the new Little Theatre in Kingston Square, once a Baptist chapel, and one's nearness to the stage, seemed to a young provincial like an intensive course of Stanislavsky. It made the acting "super real"; a heightened revelation of human experience and truth. Not until 1951, when I finally saw Stanislavsky's own production of Chekhov's *Three Sisters* at the Moscow Art Theatre, did I see anything comparable to those Whatmore productions at Hull in 1925; more especially when Colette O'Niel played an important part.

As on my second visit, to see A.A. Milne's charming comedy *Belinda*, she did. Set in Devonshire, this suited Colette. As the curtain went up on a flower-filled, sunlit garden, she was seen clutching a slim volume of poems and being helped into a hammock by her elderly maid, there to await her new conquest, the young poet Claude Devenish. She wore black and white gingham, a dress immortalized in one of Roger Fry's vivid woodcuts for the Bloomsbury/Garsington group. Colette looked incredibly beautiful; and was instantly recognizable as the aristocrat seen shopping on Spring Bank.

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[1]*Half My Days and Nights* by Hubert Nicholson (London: Heinemann, 1933).

Belinda had an errant husband and a daughter, Delia, eighteen, who arrived from Paris to fall instantly in love with mama's beautiful young poet. Evelyn Taylor and J. Kerslake Harbord played these parts, and their Act II love scene had a silent passion and shining intensity which still repercuss after more than 50 years.

Hull Little Theatre was one of the first British repertory theatres. The movement had been founded early in the century by a wealthy spinster, Florence Horniman, at the Gaiety Theatre, Manchester, with Lewis Casson and Sybil Thorndike in her company; but the Birmingham Repertory Company under Sir Barry Jackson made the movement famous during the First World War, and its influence spread to Liverpool and Bristol in the early 1920s. Hull carried the torch so well by 1925 that Miss Horniman arrived for the Saturday matinée of H.F. Rubinstein's *Peter and Paul*. This was a Strindberg-like tragedy of domestic frustration, in which Clive and Culver played rival name parts, and Colette a bitter, impoverished idealistic wife of an insurance clerk whom she continually urged to seek better things. Miss Horniman, stiffly elegant in red and gold brocade, Tudor-style, addressed us at length from the stage, and warmly praised both acting and production.

Sir Barry Jackson had seen *Belinda*, and when St. John Ervine's play *The Ship* was performed later, this author too arrived for a special matinée. *The Ship* was essentially a man's play, with no part for a leading lady, and Colette that week was to be seen only on Civic Night, seated in the Balcony wrapped in black fur, behind a phalanx of Guildhall aldermen and councillors whom she rather deliberately ignored. As she descended the staircase after the play I was behind her, and noted with surprise that she looked considerably older than her stage persona. I estimated her age as being around 40, perhaps a little more. According to *Debrett* she was then 30.

The following week A.A. Milne again. He was then a fashionable dramatist, but this was one of his more serious plays, unknown in London, called *The Lucky One*. The heroine, Pamela, was a conventional woman engaged to an Army officer who finds herself irrevocably attracted by his ex-jail bird brother, an embezzler. Colette played this woman, and I still recall her yearning voice as she asks the military officer (Colin Clive): "Oh, my dear!--*do* I love you, or am I just *charmed* by you?"; but I have often wondered if her study for and playing of this part, with its passion for a criminal under-dog, influenced her in the direction of The Howard League for Penal Reform, of which she was for so long a member. It was one of the rare parts she played which contained a love-scene. Colette O'Niel, although intensely, sensuously romantic in the Byronic sense, lacked theatrical sex-appeal. It was impossible to

imagine her as happy wife or contented mother, and only once did she play with a hint of concupiscence--and that in a sparkling intellectual comedy. She had failed as Helen of Troy in Greek tragedy with Sybil Thorndike in London ("Was this the face that launched a thousand ships?", asked a critic), and this may have been symptomatic.

It is time to describe her on stage. She always dominated the company in any play by sheer force of personal magnetism. Her beauty is to-day legendary; but in fact she was less beautiful than handsome, even at 30. Her hair was not then, as described by Russell in 1916, auburn, but black as night, with a widow's peak above a low forehead. She had a delicate aquiline nose, but a rather coarse mouth, always carefully compressed, so that disdain appeared to be a characteristic. She had a strong chin, which she tended to raise haughtily in dialogue, but her gentle voice, with its trace of upper class Irish and suggestion of controlled tears, was infinitely compelling and compassionate. She used to remind me, often, of a then celebrated vicar of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, London, who broadcast every Sunday evening from his pulpit to the nation. Colette was an atheist, and the resemblance was odd and surely fortuitous; but, remarkably, the roles she played and the texts he chose often distilled the same essence: humility; a compassionate love for humanity; and fearless courage under God in pursuit of personal identity and moral freedom. Yet this actress who could so well interpret a mystic or psychic character, and even hint at sainthood, was in appearance essentially a *femme fatale*. She resembled the Nietzchean doctrine of the Will, rather than the saint, yet could perform with mystical fervour--even when playing a worldly enchantress. Thus in Ibsen's *John Gabriel Borkman*, in the key role of Mrs. Wilton she was superbly convincing as the ruthless cosmopolitan seductress of Borkman's son and heir, telling his poor mother with demonic (or Ibscene) wisdom: "I think sometimes people owe more to a foster-mother than their real mother.... I regret to say I hardly knew my own mother, but the right foster-mother might have made me a nicer woman than many people think I am.... Goodbye."

As Fanny Wilton she was described by the Press as resembling an oil sketch by Sargent; and indeed had the extreme glamour of a timeless portrait by a master--rather Fuseli, or Rubens--of a bewitching Prussian princess. She looked uncannily fascinating, mesmeric, swathed from chin to toe in white ermine, with a few black tails and a geranium-like flower at her throat to match the colour of her mouth in the pearl-ivory skin.

In *The New Morality*--which I viewed with astonishment--she was discovered lying feverishly in bed, in négligée and lace bedcap, on a

Thames houseboat during a heatwave. This play by Harold Chapin, acted in London only once, on a Sunday evening with Gwen ffrangcon Davies as the beleaguered wife who is all for a new morality in marital relations, is one of the best twentieth-century English comedies before or since Maugham and Coward. It astonished me to see Colette looking *almost* sexy and seductive in bed, while yet in a volatile rage at her husband's humiliating flirtations. Whether Bertrand Russell took his famous phrase "a new morality" from Colette's play, or Harold Chapin took the title from him, I have no idea; but had Russell seen his Colette act brilliantly in this play he would, I am sure, have been proud of her *and* enjoyed it enormously, for both play and performance were on his mental spiritual and moral wavelength, not to mention sense of humour. As a comédienne Colette could be startlingly effective: incisive, cynical, witty, ironical, quizzical, with bubbling laughter and a smile to charm the birds off the trees. She was perceptive to the point of genius.

In Act III of *The New Morality* she achieved apotheosis, as hostess to a lamplit dinner party on deck beneath trailing trees, cool, serene, poised, a gracious "thinking reed", sensitive but adamant. Surrounded by a cast of future West End vintage--Clive, Culver, Christian Morrow, Evelyn Taylor--the Act contains a philosophical tirade extolling the virtues of civilized humour, intelligence, self-control and dignity in coping with sexual behaviour. Irony, detachment, philosophy were all, and wisdom radiated through her quiet, devastating sarcasms. One knew by the end that the pangs of sexual jealousy held no more terrors for *this* married lady. She also looked at her most conventionally beautiful. Katharine Tait, in a cogent book about her father, writes of Colette visiting how "She wore glamorous trailing clothes, strings of long beads and quantities of perfume, and she always brought exotic gifts".[2] This was the actress of *The New Morality*, Act III.

Yet there is no doubt that in Malleson's one-act play *Young Heaven* she was at her most thrilling, and came nearest to greatness as a tragic actress. She was so perfectly type-cast that for years I believed this tragedy about a touring actress whose brother is killed in World War I was biographical. However, it was written in collaboration with a Scotswoman, and when a close friend of mine dined, many years later, with Colette at the family town-house in Eccleston Square, he asked her about this and she denied it.

Colette's performance was Duse-like in its stillness, profound, concentrated depth of grief and suffering, and haunting solitude. The pain of this bereavement is so overwhelming that the woman sinks into oblivion, only to awaken "beyond the veil" in a gallant Valhalla of war

[2] *My Father Bertrand Russell* (London: Gollancz, 1976), p. 46.

dead which she calls "Young Heaven". She was so subjective, so intensely moving, that the entire audience seemed to pass "beyond" with her, on a voyage of psychic discovery. She wore a trailing blue-black silk gown, with black lace overwrap, her pallor more waxen than ever, the tear-dimmed eyes, widow's peak and tightly brushed black hair as compelling as the heart-rending, ultra-sensitive voice pouring out its agony and telepathic vision to the brother's sympathetic soldier comrade on a visit of condolence. This part was played by Colin Clive, five years later to become world-famous as Captain Stanhope in R.C. Sherriff's *Journey's End*. From Hull the play was brought to London for one Sunday night performance at the Strand Theatre. On the day after the Hull first night, I saw Colette and Miles Malleson in the street, arms closely linked two years after their divorce, obviously moved by this new association, and happily reunited.

Then there was the problem of *Leonarda*, by the Norwegian dramatist Bjørnson. This was to have been the *clou* of the season, and Colette's finest role. Who chose it, and why, I do not know; but it would have provided her with a golden opportunity: a horse-riding Norwegian aristocrat whose niece's lover transfers his affections to her, but in so stifling a bourgeois atmosphere that she is forced (by society) to "sacrifice" herself on the altar of provincial respectability. Allardyce Nicoll in *World Drama* describes it as "interesting", and even outlines the plot, particularly admiring the octogenarian Grandmother "slightly amused" by the pretensions of the young. But although rehearsals had begun, the production was cancelled owing to a dispute with the translator, and Colette O'Niel was never seen as Leonarda. This was to have been the play's British première, and would certainly have added to her reputation.

Finally, in Hull, came Farjeon's comedy, *Advertising April*, a recent West End venture of Sybil Thorndike's. It was a mildly amusing satire on the antics of British film studios and the star system, but April Mawne was not played by Colette--who had starred in a film of *Hindle Wakes*--but by her junior, Evelyn Taylor. Throughout the ten-week season the popularity of this delicious young actress had increased, and her beauty was so great that she was a natural choice for the embryo filmstar, and triumphed in the part. Colette played a supporting role, that of a woman journalist. It was at this time that she found a letter from Russell waiting at the theatre, after an absence and silence of four years. In the 1920s the *Daily Telegraph* devoted a page each Thursday to theatrical "cards", in which actors and actresses could print brief extracts from their notices in order to attract the attention of the London impresarios. Colette's appeared regularly, with cumulative

effect, for critics often praised her, and she was adept at choosing phrases in ascending order of merit. Bertrand Russell probably read those weekly signals, and realised the quality of her work in Hull. His letter requested permission to bring young John Conrad, then aged four, to see her. On the last day of *Advertising April*, after the matinée, I had occasion to visit one of the actors. On entering the stage door, I was impeded by Colette, imperious as ever, but weeping. This startling encounter left me non-plussed for 50 years; but on reading *The Life of Bertrand Russell*, at last there seemed a possible explanation.

Within weeks of closing at Hull, Colin Clive was acting at Drury Lane in an already celebrated musical, while Colette went to the "Q" Theatre at Kew Bridge, to create the part of "The Hon. Mrs. Tremayne" in a new play by Malleson. This transferred to the West End, but without Colette; who was, in any case, the original of "Margaret Neal" in his once notorious play about trial marriage, *The Fanatics*.

After four months in London, she was engaged to play what is arguably the most significant, impressive and important part in her career, that of The Lady in the first British production of Georg Kaiser's *From Morn to Midnight*, with rising actor Claude Rains in the monstrous part of the protagonist. This had an unusually big cast, and was produced by Peter Godfrey first at the Gate Theatre Studio, near Charing Cross, and then at the Regent Theatre, King's Cross. Colette has described in *After Ten Years* the tensions, difficulties and problems of that production, how Godfrey would not give them "enough light", and how magnificent was Claude Rains, in spite of all; but she says literally nothing about her own contribution.

One of the key plays of twentieth-century dramatic literature, *From Morn to Midnight*, Kaiser's thirtieth, was written in 1912, published in 1916, first performed in 1917, and with two other plays of the same period made him internationally famous. Kaiser had developed new Expressionist techniques to a high pitch of perfection. J.M. Ritchie in *Five Plays*[3] has written:

> Kaiser makes no attempt to create rounded characters of flesh and blood. Psychological naturalism was felt to be just as limiting and restrictive as the conditioning factors of milieu, race, creed, etc. Man was not the slave of such factors, he was always free to choose, always free to make his own decisions, always capable of rebirth. This was to be the theme of the whole play, as indeed of all Kaiser's plays. His aim at all times, he claimed, was to present the VISION of the regeneration of man.... So the Cashier is shown at the beginning as a crushed captive of the capitalist system. But there is no condemnation of "social conditions": instead the opening scene shows how the slightest incident (in this case the arrival of

[3]London: Calder and Boyars, 1971.

an exotic Italian woman and the subsequent stirrings of the flesh) are sufficient to open even such an automaton's eyes. From being a bank clerk dealing every day with money without thought of its significance, he suddenly sets out to test its power. This sudden "New Beginning" (*Aufbruch*) and the "Quest for Life" are favourite Expressionist situations, as too is the refusal to accept anything less than absolute values.

This "exotic Italian woman" is remarkable for her high distinction, perfect self-discipline, and immaculate grooming; and although the play is non-Christian, Christian symbols are constantly being invoked.

She is called simply "A Lady". Kaiser's description of the part Colette O'Niel created in two London theatres is simple: "(Enter a LADY. Expensive fur. Rustle of silk. FAT MAN stops short.)"

The woman is an aristocrat, the dialogue concentrated, her manner exquisite, her dilemma absolute, her visit to the bank futile, but catastrophic for the bank clerk, whose *dea ex machina* she unconsciously is. She is, moreover, the cultured mother of a grown-up son, an art expert, and she haunts Act I--as Colette did, in any case, every play in which she appeared--in its entirety. '"All the fragrance of Italy--out of a perfume bottle," sighs the cynical bank manager: "... Watch the out of town papers; when you read that a woman swindler has been arrested you'll see what I'm talking about. Then you'll have to admit that I was right. That's the last we'll ever see of our lady friend from Florence". (Exit).' But that is not enough. Later he returns: "That lady from Florence--supposedly from Florence--ever had a vision like that appear at your counter before? Furs--perfume. Still linger on, romance fills the air!--That is the full treatment. Italy; the very word has a dazzling effect--fabulous. Riviera--Mentone--Bordighera--Nice--Monte Carlo! But, where oranges grow, crooks thrive too ... Women! They are the modern sirens."

The Cashier is bewitched and embezzles millions of Deutschmark in an attempt, literally, to "buy" the beautiful bank client. He discovers her hotel, and breaks into her apartment:

CASHIER: Now you simply must come--!!

LADY (controlling herself): Are you married? (He makes an indifferent gesture.) I think that matters a great deal. If indeed I'm not to take the whole business as a joke. You have let yourself be carried away. Committed an ill-considered act. You must repair the damage. Go back to your counter and intimate that suddenly you weren't feeling quite yourself. You still have all the money on you?

CASHIER: I took the money from the--.

LADY (abruptly): Then I can take no further interest.

CASHIER: I robbed the bank--.

LADY: You are becoming a nuisance, Sir.

CASHIER: So now you *must*--.

LADY: What I must do is--.

CASHIER: Don't you see, now you *must*!

LADY: Ridiculous.

. . . . . .

CASHIER: --furs--silk--shimmered and rustled--the air was heavy with exotic perfumes!

LADY: It's winter. I don't dress out of the ordinary, by my standards.

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And later still:-

LADY (horrified): Be quiet.

CASHIER: I pocketed all the money--you pervaded the bank--you shimmered and rustled--you rested your bare hand in mine--I felt the warmth of your body--the caress of your breath--.

LADY: I am a lady!

Towards the end of Act I, her son enters, after she has finally got rid of the intruder.

SON: You are infinitely patient with me. I drag you from your lovely, quiet life in Fiesole. You are Italian. I drag you through Germany in the middle of winter. You sleep in trains--second and third-class hotels--get involved with all sorts of people--.

LADY: I've certainly had my fill of that to-day.

The Act ends with the arrival of the Lady's money from a delayed cheque, and mother and son sweep out of the apartment, grandly, en route for Florence and Fiesole, leaving the embezzler to his doom:

CASHIER (pointing upwards to the theatre gallery): That's where it is, there you have the compelling fact. There you have the ultimate compression of reality. Here we witness the dizzy, soaring heights of accomplishment. From the first rows right up to the Gods, fusion. Out of the seething dissolution of the individual comes the concentrated essence. Passion! All restraints--all differences melt away. Concealing coverings stripped off--nakedness--Passion! To break through is to experience. Doors, gates fade away. Trumpets blare and walls crumble. No resisting--no modesty--no mothering--no childhood: nothing but pure passion! This is it. This is really worth while.

The play was translated for the first British production by Ashley Dukes. To my lasting regret, I never saw Colette O'Niel play that part in the still serene London of early 1926. Nor did I see her in Ashley Dukes' own near-classic, *The Man with a Load of Mischief*, when it opened in Exeter before a triumphant Irish tour. That part was also called "The Lady", and for this tour she was personally chosen by the author, who had been impressed by her skill in make-up during rehearsals of *From Morn to Midnight;* but the play might have been written for her, so aptly did it express her personal philosophy. Nor did I see her on the great South African tour with Lewis Casson and Sybil Thorndike, when

she played another modern part: the scientist daughter-in-law at war to the knife with a too-possessive mother in Sidney Howard's *The Silver Cord*, in which she followed in the footsteps of her own theatre idol, the American actress Clare Eames.

Once more I saw her at Hull, in 1928, when she returned as guest artist with the then fully-professional repertory company, briefly to play The Vicaress in G. Martinez Sierra's once famous, gentle play set in a Spanish convent, *The Cradle Song*. Her Vicaress was nothing if not austere, but oddly, she played that formidable woman for *laughs*--at least three. Most vividly I recall her "business" with a small mirror secreted in her nun's sleeve, and furtively withdrawn when no one (except the audience) was looking, in order to admire herself. This always got delighted laughter; but it was strictly out of character, and embarrassingly revealing of the actress's attitude to part and play.

The last time I saw her on the stage was with Sir Frank Benson in *The School for Scandal*, during his farewell national tour, in the autumn of 1929. As leading lady she played the five greatest female roles, Millamant excepted, in English classic comedy, with perhaps the most distinguished classical actor of his generation, and this alone should correct any impression that her stage career was a failure. Yet of all the great ladies I saw her play, her Lady Teazle was the most nearly colourless, a mere pearl-grey pencil sketch of Sheridan's warm, delightful heroine--except in the Screen Scene, which she made memorable by a combination of quivering outrage, innocence, anger and remorse on being so discovered hidden in Charles Surface's rooms by Sir Peter. I would have given much to see her Portia, with her passion for justice and humanity and lucid thought, yet another portrait of Colette herself. But the quality of Colette O'Niel's acting is still preserved in her writing: in the fragment called "The End", published (with Russell's help) in the *English Review* of September, 1919: surely an early literary manifestation of tragic genius; in the wonderful passage on Love, in *After Ten Years*, beginning "That love is successful or unsuccessful matters not one jot ..." and ending "... is not utterly to fail"; in the ferocious description of a battle of wolves in the early pages of *In the North*; and in the sheer impulsiveness of her evocation of Russell, in that brave and gallant opening tribute to *Bertrand Russell, Philosopher of the Century*.

London Bennitt Gardiner