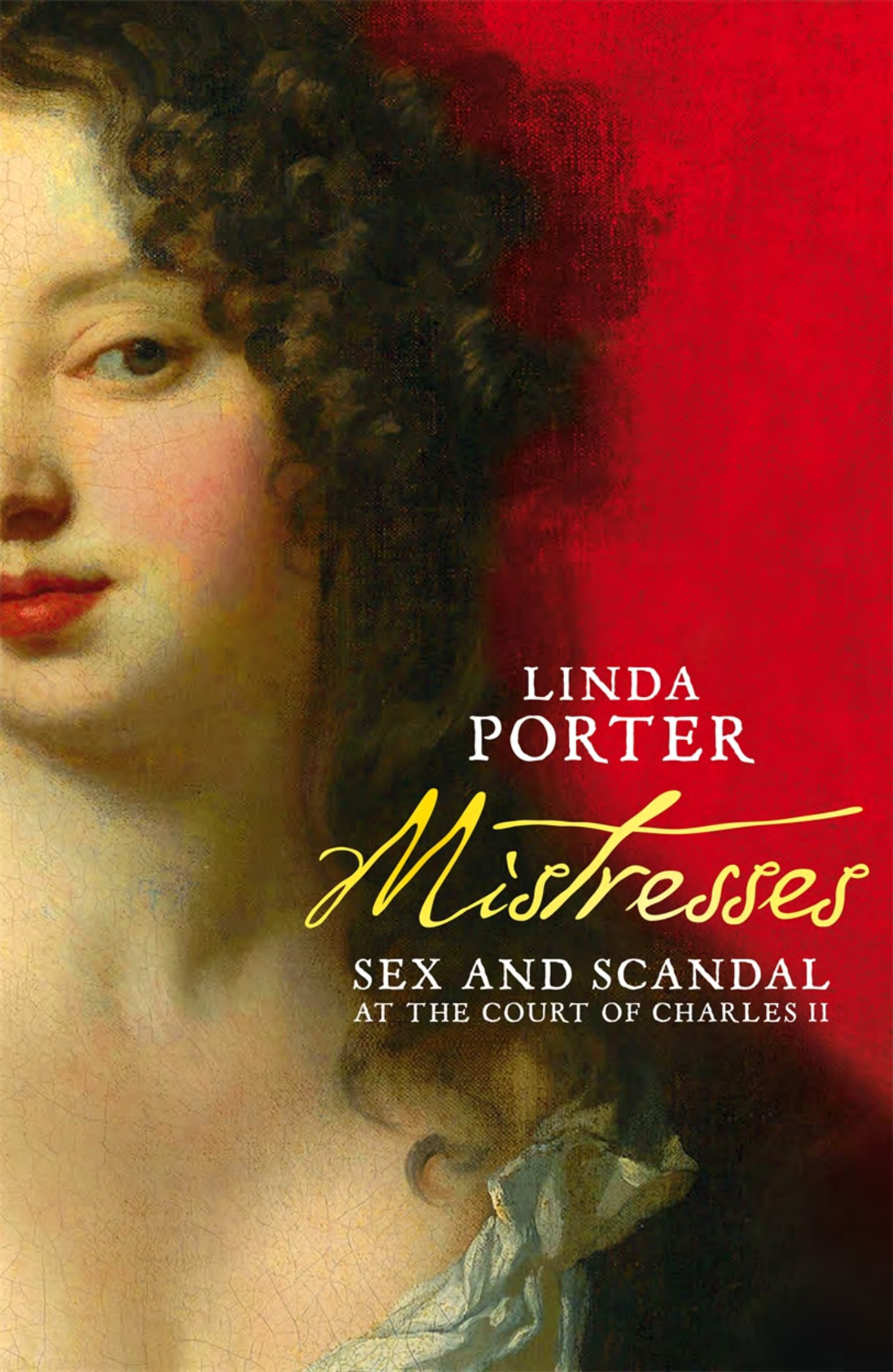
LINDA
PORTER
Mistresses
SEX AND SCANDAL
AT THE COURT OF CHARLES II

The Illegitimate Children of Charles II

By Lucy Walter: James Crofts (later Scott), duke of Monmouth and Buccleuch (1649–85)

By Elizabeth Killigrew: Charlotte Jemima Henrietta Maria Fitzroy, countess of Yarmouth (1651–84)

By Catherine Pegge: Charles Fitzcharles, first earl of Plymouth (1657–80)
Catherine Fitzcharles, b.1658, died in infancy

By Barbara Palmer: Anne Fitzroy, countess of Sussex (1661–1722)
Charles Fitzroy, duke of Southampton (1662–1730)
Henry Fitzroy, duke of Grafton (1663–90)
Charlotte Fitzroy, countess of Lichfield (1664–1718)
George Fitzroy, duke of Northumberland (1665–1715)

By Nell Gwyn: Charles Beauclerk, duke of St Albans (1670–1726)
James Beauclerk (1671–81)

By Louise de Kéroualle: Charles Lennox, duke of Richmond and Lennox (1672–1723)

By Mary (Moll) Davis: Mary Tudor, countess of Derwentwater (1673–1726)

Prologue

The Hague, United Provinces of the Netherlands, February 1649

It had been a subdued festive season at court, despite the host's attempts to lighten the atmosphere. Charles Stuart, Prince of Wales and heir to three kingdoms, had recently recovered from a bout of smallpox and, though restored to health without any of the disfiguring effects of a disease that often blighted the lives of those who survived, he was beset by concerns which could not be alleviated by the normal diversions of Christmas. In England, his father was kept a close prisoner with an uncertain fate. Here, in the United Provinces of the Netherlands, there was tension of a different sort. Charles was not blind to the failings of his sister Mary's husband or to the strains in their marriage. William of Orange seemed happier with drunken companions and whores than he did with his wife. Not that this was entirely surprising. Plucked from a secure childhood as Princess Royal of England, to be married at the age of nine to a fourteen-year-old whose father occupied an uncertain role in a struggling republic, Mary had never settled. Even the presence of an affectionate aunt and a bevy of cousins, all exiles themselves, had not entirely assuaged her heartache. Mary felt the marriage was beneath her, never bothering to learn Dutch, relying instead on the French that she had learned in the schoolroom at St James's Palace. Since her

arrival here seven years ago, she had grown apart from the handsome teenager she had married as an innocent child. Yet William, keen on glory but low on funds, was still committed to helping the beleaguered Stuarts. For that, Charles and his brother James were grateful, especially as their mother, Queen Henrietta Maria, had never succeeded in getting anything but fair words from her relatives in France.

The anxieties that hung in the air that Christmas grew even greater at the beginning of 1649. After two years enduring the patronizing disdain of the French court – for it is always disquieting to have close relations who seem to have lost their grip on power – Charles was not sorry to be away from Paris and his mother's ghastly matchmaking schemes. The queen's determination to arrange a marriage for her tall, taciturn son, who conveniently forgot all his French when forced to woo his incurably vain cousin, La Grande Mademoiselle, did not make Charles eager to find a wife. In the Netherlands, he was at least able to relax with Mary, of whom he was very fond, and keep a careful eye on James, whose antics after he had escaped from England nearly a year earlier had caused Charles much dismay. His affection for James was always muted, though he would remain true to him for the rest of his life.

For a family already reeling under the strain of a long civil war, divided between three countries and with two children still effectively prisoners of the rebels in England, the year 1649 started grimly. Word soon came across the North Sea that Charles I was about to be put on trial for treason against his own subjects, causing further consternation to the three oldest Stuart siblings. The penalty for treason was death, but it was surely inconceivable that such a fate would befall an anointed king.

When the news of the outcome of the trial reached the United Provinces, nearly a week after Charles I's execution, no one knew how to tell his eldest son. Though accounts vary, it seems likely that he was gently taken out of a crowded room by his chaplain, Dr Goffe, into a quieter, private place. The good doctor, uncomfortably aware of the gravity of what he was about to impart, was

unable to find the words to break such tidings. Instead, he knelt before the boy (Charles was still only eighteen years old) and addressed him, quite simply, as 'Your Majesty'.

Overwhelmed by the emotion of the moment, the new king burst into tears. But even as he tried to take in the enormity of what had happened, the weight of responsibility now thrust upon him and the loss of a father he had loved, he might, however briefly, have reflected on the fact that he was about to become a father himself.

Part One

Companions in Exile

Lucy Walter

1630–58

CHAPTER ONE

'Mrs Barlow'

'A brown, beautiful, bold but insipid creature'
John Evelyn, on Lucy Walter

These were uncertain times. The Thirty Years War, the last great religious conflict in Europe, had just ended. The British Isles stayed largely aloof, before being consumed by their own woes. The Civil Wars that broke out in England in 1642 were preceded by serious revolts in Scotland and Ireland, fatally undermining the authority of Charles I. Families were divided and lives disrupted during the conflict. The loss of life was significant – a fifth of the population is estimated to have perished. Small wonder, then, that those who were determined to hold the king to account called him 'that man of blood'. For the royalist survivors of the wars, there were limited options. A significant number chose to stay and see if they could settle in the strange new world of an English republic. But some had decided to leave well before the axe fell on the monarch's bowed head on 30 January 1649. Clinging to the hope that there were opportunities in Europe, rather than the bitter bread of exile, they were willing to risk all. One of them was a girl, still in her teens, who believed that her prospects would be brighter across the North Sea. There, she might find, among the soldiers and cavaliers who had accompanied the Prince of Wales into exile, if not a husband, at least a protector. She had

frequented the company of military men in London and knew how to make the most of her attractions. And those attractions were considerable.

Lucy Walter was the same age as Prince Charles when they met in the summer of 1648 at The Hague. Born in Pembrokeshire, in south-west Wales, Lucy came from a family with long links to the area. Her father, William Walter, was a local gentleman of moderate means whose lands included the medieval tower house known as Roch Castle, set high above the shoreline in Haverfordwest.[1] Socially, William Walter was a solid member of the gentry but his wife, Elizabeth, brought not only a substantial dowry but aristocratic connections; her uncle was the first earl of Carbery. Lucy did not, however, enjoy a happy childhood. Elizabeth Walter claimed that her husband was constantly unfaithful to her, and, worse, that he made her take in his bastard children by one of the family's maids. When she protested, he assaulted her.

Whatever the truth of this story, it is clear that the marriage had foundered by the time Lucy was eleven years old, because her mother, then living in London with her daughter and two sons, was granted financial support against her husband's estates in a case which eventually went all the way to the House of Lords. For six years, despite the ravages of civil war, Elizabeth Walter seems to have received enough of the settlement to live on but in 1647, with William Walter countering his wife's claims of abandonment and adultery by accusing her of the same conduct, the decision was reversed and Elizabeth was ordered to return her children to her husband's custody. Clearly, Lucy did not want to go back to rural Wales and a violent, unreliable father. She and her mother made the decision to leave England and cross to the Netherlands, where one of Mrs Walter's sisters lived. In order to avoid detection, they travelled under an assumed name, so that, when Lucy set foot on Dutch soil, she had been transformed into Mrs Lucy Barlow. The title did not denote married status; in the seventeenth century, all women who were not part of the aristocracy were known as 'Mrs'. To be referred to as 'Miss' was

derogatory, since it indicated that you were someone's mistress rather than wife.

The time spent in London was a formative part of Lucy's chaotic upbringing. Though she probably received only the most basic education, she had acquired sufficient social polish to make her acceptable in polite society. This was coupled with very considerable beauty (even James II, who later had cause to belittle her and sully her reputation, acknowledged as much). She had learned how to look good on the arm of a young aristocratic soldier. The great republican thinker and brave Parliamentary army officer, Algernon Sidney, second son of the earl of Leicester, was said to have parted with fifty gold pieces in order to enjoy her company, according to the future James II: 'Algernon Sidney (though at that time a colonel in Cromwell's army of Saints) having got notice of her, entered into treaty about her and came to an agreement for fifty broad pieces (as he himself related this story to his RH). But being in the nick of time commanded hastily out of London to his regiment, he missed his bargain.'[2] The story cannot be corroborated, though Algernon Sidney's most recent biographer says that it should not automatically be discounted, even if it was put around subsequently as part of a concerted attempt to depict Lucy as a good-time girl and woman of easy virtue. She would, no doubt, have viewed such an arrangement as a reasonable business transaction. There were plenty of other young women in her situation doing exactly the same. Like them, Lucy knew that her physical attractions and a pleasant, flirtatious manner were her passport to security. She had every intention of deploying her weapons and using the connections she had made in London, once she got to Holland.

There, she attached herself to Algernon's younger brother, Robert Sidney, who was a royalist officer in the service of Prince Charles. Lucy was untroubled by the conflicting principles of the two brothers. Financial support and the prospect of enjoying herself were more pressing concerns for an eighteen-year-old whose mother soon returned to England, leaving her alone, much to the

disapproval of Elizabeth Walter's Dutch in-laws. Ignoring their reaction to her lifestyle, Lucy enjoyed several months with Robert Sidney and was much admired by other young royalist officers who crowded around the Stuarts. It was a febrile community, united in equal parts by boredom and bravado, and Robert Sidney soon realized that it would be difficult to keep Lucy to himself. Certainly, he could not hope to compete with Prince Charles when the heir to the throne's eye lighted on Sidney's beguiling mistress. Humiliated by Lucy's abandonment of him, Sidney made disparaging comments about her sexual history, though the fact that she had long since lost her virginity could scarcely have come as a surprise to anyone.

We do not know how Lucy came to Charles's attention and contemporary sources are split as to who was the instigator of their affair. But some time in the summer of 1648 she left Robert Sidney for the Prince of Wales. She and Charles were the same age, both good-looking, dark haired and living for the moment, because, in truth, there was nothing else they could do. Their romance, if it can even be called that, was brief, perhaps no more than a few nights of passion. Lucy Walter was an amusing distraction while he waited for an opportunity to take decisive action that might help his father, then a prisoner on the Isle of Wight, triumph at last in the long struggle with his subjects. That chance came much sooner than he expected. A week or so after he bedded 'Mrs Barlow', Charles sailed away from the Netherlands at the head of a royalist fleet revitalized by the addition of turncoat Parliamentary captains and their mutinous crews.

This foray into naval warfare was unsuccessful. Prince Charles never managed to land in England and was back in the Netherlands by September 1648, where he passed the remainder of the year as a helpless spectator of the final act in the drama of Charles I's life. Yet if his sudden departure from Lucy had effectively ended their liaison almost as soon as it had begun, he could not quite brush it off altogether. For Lucy was pregnant and Charles acknowledged the child she was carrying as his own. Their affair

may have been short but its repercussions were long – for the king, his brother, James, duke of York, and for the baby son who became the first of Charles II's fourteen illegitimate children, the ill-fated duke of Monmouth.