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**UNMASKED:
Towards a Restoration Discourse of Female Libertinism**

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**A Thesis
in
The Department
of
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ABSTRACT

UNMASKED: Towards a Restoration Discourse of Female Libertinism

Danielle Bobker

This thesis attempts to deconstruct the Restoration double standard which linked male promiscuity to libertinism, and female promiscuity to prostitution. The emphasis is placed on assessing the sexual ideologies embedded in some of the literature of the period. The impact of socioeconomic status in shaping the contrasting identities of the libertine and the prostitute is also considered. In the first three chapters, the literary analysis is framed by brief portraits of historical libertine women. In the latter part of the thesis, consideration is given to the significance of a libertine identity as a model for female authorship during the Restoration, and a suggestion is made regarding the role of the female libertine in the development of early eighteenth-century notions of gender and class.

I am extremely grateful to my supervisor Marcie Frank, for her fabulous course on female authorship which first brought Restoration London to life for me, and for her guidance, patience, and encouragement.

for SQ

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....1

Chapter One

Beyond Nymphs and Nymphos:
Deconstructing the myth of female modesty
in The Country Wife and The Masque of Calisto.....6

Chapter Two

Truewit and The Whores Rhetorick:
Status, language and sexual identity
during the Restoration.....50

Chapter Three

Aphra Behn: auth-WHORE or WrITer?
Sexual identity and authorship in The Rover.....93

Coda

From the Court to the Coffeehouse:
Female libertinism and the bourgeois public sphere..129

List of Works Cited.....157

INTRODUCTION

The libertine-wit has been seen as the embodiment of the spirit of the Restoration for more than three hundred years. Certainly King Charles II has been closely associated with the libertine ideology. Though not much of a wit himself, Charles was a great appreciator and supporter of his merry gang of courtiers, and he was both tolerant of and inclined himself towards sexual promiscuity (Palmer 19). Even more so than Charles II, John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester has been described as the Restoration's libertine *extraordinaire* (McKeon 309). As a youth, the cash-strapped Earl caused a scandal when he eloped with Elizabeth Mallet, the "Heiress of the West;" and his notoriety only increased with each of his countless affairs. An important patron of the arts, Rochester gallivanted with theatre artists such as Elizabeth Barry, Aphra Behn, John Dryden, John Crowne, Nell Gwyn and William Wycherley, and was a poet and dramatist himself. His incisive poems depicted the exploits of the aristocracy, sexual and otherwise, and by turns shocked and delighted the Court, earning him a reputation as the "prince of all devils of the Town" (cited in Palmer 223) and as a brilliant libertine wit.

What of the women of the court who played the same game? There was the bed hopping, trouble making, royal mistress Lady Barbara Castlemaine, who reputedly ruled with absolute power over the King (Palmer 80). There was the

noblewoman and wit, Catherine Sedley. Craving both financial autonomy and sexual adventure, Sedley opted for "serial monogamy" rather than marriage (N.Roberts 141). And there was the prolific Aphra Behn, whose adventurous independence was mirrored in the self-reliant and witty female characters in her bawdy comedies of manners. Though all of these women were clearly rivals both in wit and lust to the merry gang of courtiers, they were seen as whores, not rakes, by many of their contemporaries.

During the Restoration the sexually assertive woman was rarely seen as a clever libertine consciously using her wit to satisfy her senses; neither have contemporary historians and literary critics done much to expand the gender-limited definition of libertinism, or to shift the notion that the sexually assertive woman was ruled by her purse above all. "Imperial whores," a chapter in Tony Palmer's macho biography of Charles II, sums up the common attitude. Some feminist academics--Catherine Gallagher and Nickie Roberts, among them--have attempted to revise the image of the Restoration prostitute by reinterpreting her as a resourceful woman who, making the most of her difficult and disempowered position, consciously chose independence from a male "owner"(husband) and paid the required price. In my opinion, these feminist critics are wrong on two counts: they have given ground too quickly in accepting that the female counterpart to the libertine is the whore; and they

have misrepresented prostitution by ignoring issues of status or class associated with it.

On the other hand, J.G. Turner, the literary critic most engaged by the history of the libertinism, ignores the female libido altogether in his study of libertines across European literature and society. Women are simply those who are most often charmed, seduced or ravished by their rakish predators; no woman or female character is linked directly to the libertine identity. Harold Weber's book, The Restoration Rake, does consider the possibility of there being a female rake. However, Weber looks, for the most part, at those witty, sexually assertive female characters created by male playwrights of the period, and reads them, for the most part, as projections of male fantasy. Weber frames his chapter on the female rake with a discussion of the limitations of the libertine ideology for Restoration women.

Unlike Weber, I try to focus in this thesis on the potential for transgressive power implicit in a female rake identity, and on the role this much-ignored identity might have played first within the Court culture and later in the development of modern patriarchy as it emerged at the end of the seventeenth century.¹ Because my central interest is in differentiating the identity of the female libertine from

¹ My view of the development of modern patriarchy depends heavily on Michael McKeon's article "Historicizing Patriarchy: The Emergence of Gender Difference in England, 1660-1750."

other promiscuous identities of the Restoration, I have selected textual material for its explicit or implicit sexual ideology, above all. Like Weber, however, I do recognize that in most Restoration writing there is serious ideological resistance to a positive representation of female libertinism. Sketching the identity of the female libertine from my readings of such materials, I frequently find myself in the somewhat awkward position of defining her through clear examples of what she was not. The mini-biographies of real-life libertine women of the Restoration which frame each of the chapters have been included, therefore, to compensate in part for this lack.

The literature discussed here ranges from the obscure to the wildly popular, and belongs to a variety of genres: there are two comedies of manners, a court masque, an instruction manual in dialogue form, a couple of broadsides, and a few poems. Whatever their diversity of form and style, all of the primary texts I refer to were written and published or performed between 1674 and 1683. I have limited my selections to works from the period of the reign of Charles II because I believe that it was then that libertinism, and female libertinism in particular, was in its prime.

I develop my arguments mostly by staging comparisons of the distinct sexual ideologies represented in a variety of texts, sometimes capitalizing on some of the dialogue which

occurred at the moment these texts were originally received. First I compare Wycherley's The Country Wife to Crowne's Masque of Calisto because of the interesting relationship between the representation of women in these plays and their reception by the women of the Court. Then I compare the discourse of prostitution as illuminated by The Whores Rhetorick, a satirical but surprisingly complex conduct guide for streetwalkers, with the archetypal libertine discourse of some of Rochester's poems. I compare Angellica, the prostitute character in The Rover by Aphra Behn, to the Hellena, a libertine character in the same play. In the final section of this thesis, the coda, I move away from the incestuous Court scene to compare shifting ideas of sexuality as depicted in two coffee-house pamphlets, "The Women's Petition Against Coffee" and "The Mens Answer to the Womens Petition."

Female libertinism developed at a time when ideas of both gender and status were in great flux. By recuperating the libertine identity for women through the textual comparisons in the first three chapters, I of necessity bring the categories of gender and sexual identity into relation with that of status. In the coda, I consider the possibility that as the English aristocracy declined, the subversive-yet-elite female rake may have served as an exceptional figure against which emerging bourgeois notions both of gender and of class could be defined.

**Beyond Nymphs and Nymphos:
Deconstructing female modesty
in The Country Wife and The Masque of Calisto**

Lady Barbara Castlemaine the Duchess of Cleveland loved sex. And the Court enjoyed talking about how much she was getting almost as much as she enjoyed getting it. Renowned Court wit John Wilmot, the Earl of Rochester wrote:

The Duchess I say is much to be admir'd,
Although she ne'er was satisfied or tired.
Full 40 men a day provided for this whore,
Yet like a bitch she wags her tail for more. (cited in
Greene 102)

Among Castlemaine's lovers, besides the King, were Henry Jermyn the courtier, Charles Hart the actor, Jacob Hall the tight-rope dancer, one of her running footmen, and a Maid of Honour called Miss Hobart who was rumoured to be "something more fond of the fair sex than she appeared" (cited in D.Roberts 106) (Greene 123, Morrah 45, Palmer 73).

Rochester was just as voracious in his appetite, and just as broadminded in selecting his prey. While his rich heiress wife lived quietly in the country, Rochester toyed with countless others in London, including Elizabeth Barry the celebrated performer he "discovered" and trained himself, Mrs Roberts one of Charles II's harem, infamous prostitutes Lady Bennett and Mrs Cresswell, and, in times of

desperation, his page (Greene 117, 123).¹ But despite their equal notoriety, Rochester's poem is not simply a good natured "nugde nudge wink" between comrades: "whore" is a label meant to sting.

In 1668 more satire on Castlemaine's promiscuity came in the form of two anonymously written broadsheets, and the aftermath of their publication shows how serious being called a whore could be. First came "The Poor Whore's Petition" proposing that all London prostitutes receive protection for their "habitations, trades and employments" in return for a tax paid to Lady Castlemaine, "the most splendid, illustrious, serene and eminent Lady of Pleasure." A week later "The Gracious Answer of... the Countess of Castlem..., to the Poor Whores' Petition" began circulating around the Court. In "The Gracious Answer" Castlemaine was made to explain the advantages of belonging to the Church of Rome: in the eyes of her new religion "venereal pleasure, accompanied with looseness, debauchery and profaneness, are not such heinous crimes and crying sins, but rather they do mortify the flesh" (cited in Palmer 76-77). Pepys observed that Castlemaine was "horribly vexed" by the pamphlets (cited in Morrah 58). Charles II was even more so: as an attack on his mistress and subject, these publications also constituted an attack on his rule. A short time later the

1 As Rochester puts it in one of his poems, "There's a sweet soft page of mine/ Does the trick worth forty wenches" (cited in McKeon 309).

King removed Castlemaine from the Court, providing her with a new title, a pension, and Berkshire House, an estate with its own grounds not far from St. James Palace (Palmer 77, Masters 82). His reputation depended on getting "the most illustrious Lady of Pleasure" permanently out of his hair.²

Obviously the threat to the throne posed by these broadsheets went deeper than branding Castlemaine the nation's "chief whore": the dig at Castlemaine's Catholicism, for instance, pointed to the issue of Charles II's religious ambiguity which was a source of serious controversy throughout his reign. Yet the petitions' author(s) knew that an important part of the strategy for humiliating the King must be to target his uppity sex-obsessed mistress. All of London gossiped that Lady Barbara Castlemaine ruled over Charles II "as a tyrant" (cited in Palmer 80). Reminding everyone that the King had traded some of his socioeconomic and political power in exchange for sex with a conniving slut was a quick and easy way to undermine his authority.³

2 As Weber remarks, "Though the king's mistresses might enjoy a certain protection from public censure, those women at court who failed to keep a modicum of public modesty could pay dearly for their sexual indiscretions." (147)

3 At the end of her biography, Hamilton sums up Lady Castlemaine as "a beauty, a miss, a wit and a politician" (207). Andrews, another of her biographers, also sees Castlemaine's political role as central to her identity. "As a cultivated geisha and a woman accepted alone on terms of equality with mainly intelligent men," he writes, "she promoted politics as well as personality, affairs of state as well as of sexual provocation" (103).

Lady Castlemaine may have been the queen of the libertine scene, but she was in very good company: the King himself, and his whole "merry gang" of courtiers (including the inimitable Rochester), were all constantly on the make. And if Castlemaine made no secret of her sexual licentiousness, she was certainly no less discreet than her male counterparts at Court. So why did singling out Castlemaine's sexual appetite for ridicule prove so effective? At the heart of these parodies of Castlemaine's lust, and the source of their sting, was the widespread (and still all too familiar) assumption that only men were capable of healthily enjoying sex and pleasure for their own sake. Chastity, euphemistically called "modesty" or "honour," was the ultimate female virtue. As Aphra Behn puts it in The Rover, modesty was a woman's "richest treasure" (5.1 275)--because it was the only means of ensuring she would be protected within the patriarchal system of exchange.⁴ A woman was her father's property until her marriage, at which point she was exchanged and became her husband's: first chastity, then monogamy

4 The value of chastity at the time can even be quantified. According to Nickie Roberts, the market price of virgin whores reached a peak of 50 pounds shortly after the Restoration. Though a madam like Elisabeth Wisebourne of Drury Lane might round up hundreds of "fresh ones" from inns, taverns, prisons and slavesellers around the country, the demand was always greater than the supply. It became such a common practice to restore young women's "lost treasures," however, that the price of a maidenhead dropped to 5 pounds during the eighteenth century (161).

maintained a woman's value as a possession. Women could-- and did--choose to have sex, but the established gendered rules of the sexual marketplace were fixed. A minority of those women willing to share their "treasure" outside of marriage were seen as just plain crazy, degenerate and depraved. For the most part, however, it was assumed that the women who "gave it away" did so in expectation of some kind of reward--either something as tangible as money or as slippery as social status. In short, women's sexual activity was generally equated with prostitution. The double standard reigned supreme.

Sometimes those women who chose to be "immodest" internalised this common view of their sexuality. Nell Gwyn rose from the lowly position of orange-wench to become a favourite on the Restoration stage and then mistress to the King. Part of Nell Gwyn's special appeal to the Restoration nobility was that, as they saw it, she called a spade a spade and accepted who she was without pretension. She scoffed at Louise de K roualle, another of the King's lovers, for what she saw as false dignity:

[She] pretends to be a person of great quality. She claims that everyone in France is her relation; the moment some great one dies she puts on mourning. Well! If she be a lady of such quality why then does she demean herself to be a courtezan? She ought to die of shame... as for

me, 'tis my profession; I do not pretend to aught better. (cited in N.Roberts 149)

Unlike some of her more aristocratic contemporaries, Nell Gwyn was untroubled by the popular opinion of women of her ilk. In her own eyes, she was "nothing more" than a courtesan. She was the kind of plain-dealing woman that Rochester probably had in mind when he wrote of the Court, "Hypocrisy [is] the only vice in decay... [N]o woman among us disowns being a whore" (cited in Greene 117).

Rumour has it, ironically enough, that once she became the King's lover, Nell Gwyn, the "darling strumpet of the [Restoration] crowd," remained monogamous (Greene 124). Ultimately, Barbara Castlemaine's proud and self-serving sexual stance may have proved more challenging to the Restoration nobility. She had secured an important place for herself in the social sphere of Charles II's Court, she had provided the King with children--something Queen Catherine of Braganza had been unable to do--and, as the King's number one mistress, she had influenced some major royal decisions. That a woman this close to the King was overtly and aggressively promiscuous was bad enough for his image. The well-known fact that Castlemaine was no longer even sleeping with him only added salt to the wound. Not only was the monarch being very publicly and very frequently cuckolded by his own mistress, he was being denied sexual access to her himself. Castlemaine's behavior at Court

clearly raised awareness of inadequacies specific to Charles II. In the petitions against her, the popular double standard is brandished with such venomous charm that one can only assume that Castlemaine's seemingly uncontrollable sexuality inflamed more widespread anxieties around female sexuality as well.

Over the centuries writing on the Restoration has continued to portray Lady Barbara Castlemaine--and her female peers who unapologetically slept around--as prostitutes (Gallagher WWTMW 70, Greene 39, N.Roberts 141, Todd 73). Today the myth of female modesty still supports an interpretation of Castlemaine as "the Royal Whore" (Andrews), an overblown control-freak "bitch in heat," while a male equivalent like Rochester gets cast as an independent, sexy and brilliant bad boy, "the prince of all devils" of London (cited in Palmer 223).

But isn't it possible that some of those aristocratic Restoration "whores" may have been driven by something other than mental depravity or lust for power? And isn't it possible that at least some of the time, some of these ladies saw themselves as players as slick and suave and elegant as the Earl himself?

To begin the process of reconfiguring the identity of these "dishonourable" women, I will take a closer look at the double standard in this chapter. The impact of this notion was undeniably monolithic: as Angeline Goreau

explains, the women of the Restoration "had been educated to modesty, and it remained a powerful force whether they chose to conform to its dictates or defy them" (179). For Restoration women who did want to flirt with a more appealing self-image, was there any way to escape this monolith? In answering this question, William Wycherley's comedy The Country Wife (1675) and John Crowne's masque Calisto (1675) will serve as a dialogue on modesty which will allow me to illuminate more fully what the term meant, and then to search for possible ways around it.

The Maids of Honour were young noblewomen, girls really, who had been invited to live at Court and attend to the Queen and various Duchesses and mistresses, while seeking out suitable husbands. Very soon after the first production of The Country Wife opened, the Maids of Honour "cried it down," ostensibly because they disapproved of the scandalous way in which Wycherley had represented female sexuality (D.Roberts 108). John Crowne was commissioned to write a masque deemed suitable for performance by these same Maids of Honour. First I want to consider Wycherley's portrayal of female sexuality through the eyes of the Maids of Honour in the audience, in the hopes of identifying what bothered them so much. Then I will read The Masque of Calisto as a direct response to their issues. While a cursory reading of the relationship between these two dramas seems to reinforce the patriarchal view of gendered sex

roles, the subtext of this dialogue exposes complexities and contradictions in the double standard and in the notion of female honour. I will argue that it is Crowne's seemingly cautious masque, not Wycherley's sophisticated, bawdy comedy, that provides a far more open-ended and subversive representation of female sexuality during the Restoration.

Wycherley's affair with none other than Lady Barbara Castlemaine, which started in 1671, was in large part responsible for his getting hooked up with the other Court wits as well as to his primary patron and friend, the Duke of Buckingham, another of Castlemaine's lovers. Having heard from Rochester that Wycherley was "a Man with whose conversation [he] would be pleased above all things" and "as much in love with Wit, as he was with [Castlemaine]" (61), Buckingham demanded to meet the young playwright, and was charmed. What began as a competition for Barbara Castlemaine's affections turned into male camaraderie. I believe that Wycherley's experience as sexual rival and friend not only to Buckingham, but to the King as well is reflected in The Country Wife.

Castlemaine herself was also rumoured to be a major inspiration for the play (Palmer 79). Some might say--and many probably did--that it is thus no coincidence that many of the women depicted in the play are nymphomaniacs. Margery, Pinchwife's country wife, is new to London and

hasn't been initiated into Court culture, though she quickly picks up on some of the rules of the sexual marketplace. Pinchwife's sister Alethea, "often regarded as Wycherley's ideal woman" (Trussler xi), is the "honourable" exception who proves the rule. "Typical" female behavior is therefore exemplified by Lady Fidget, Sir Jasper Fidget's wife, Mistress Dainty Fidget, her sister-in-law, and Mistress Squeamish, a relative. Together they form a chorus of hypocritical sluts who are quick to diss Horner when they believe he is impotent and incapable of being "as civil as ladies would desire" (1.1 146), but who, after they discover he is in fact still well-equipped to please them, are all too eager to take advantage of his sly scheme. In the last act, the three reach the pinnacle of their debauchery: drunk and slobbering over Horner, they agree to be "sister sharers" of their "secret" lover (5.4 176).

As well as appearing somewhat depraved, this chorus of ladies bear at least a faint odour of whorishness. While Lady Fidget, Daisy Fidget and Mistress Squeamish seem to enjoy the game of seduction for its own sake, as Horner points out, their restless urges are also motivated by greed:

HORNER ...I must confess I have heard that great ladies, like great merchants, set but the higher prices upon what they have, because they are not in necessity of taking the first offer... With your pardon, ladies; I

know, like great men in offices, you seem to exact flattery and attendance only from your followers; but you have receivers about you, and such fees to pay, a man is afraid to pass your grants. Besides, we must let you win at cards, or we lose your hearts. And if you make an assignation, 'tis at a goldsmiths's, jeweller's, or china-house, where, for your honour you deposit to him, he must pawn his to the punctual cit, and so paying for what you take up, pays for what he takes up. (5.4 138-153)

Lady Fidget and Mistress Squeamish don't object to his account; they facetiously shift its logic instead. Their lovers' gifts are a kind of insurance: they need to be "assured of [their] gallants' love" they say, and "love is better known by liberality than by jealousy" (5.4 154-156).

Some of the Maids of Honour watching the original production of The Country Wife may have cringed a little at the implication that certain noblewomen are whores who demand that their lovers pay "for what [they take] up." But the idea that some ladies drive a hard bargain for the "sale" of their honour was not nearly as scandalous as the way Wycherley has Lady and Daisy Fidget and Mistress Squeamish warp and twist the value of modesty itself: if some women choose to behave badly and position themselves at the sleazy and greedy end of the female modesty continuum, the "virtuous" women at the other end of the continuum only

appear all the more chaste and pure by contrast. But when, while flirting with Horner, they insinuate that female honour is nothing more than a performance, Lady and Daisy Fidget and Mistress Squeamish are treading on dangerous ground:

LADY FIDGET Why should you not think that we women make use of our reputation, as you men of yours, only to deceive the world with less suspicion? Our virtue is like the statesman's religion, the Quaker's word, the gamester's oath, and the great man's honour: but to cheat those that trust us.

MISTRESS SQUEAMISH And that demureness, coyness, and modesty that you see in our faces in the boxes at plays, is as much a sign of a kind woman, as a vizard-mask in the pit.

DAINTY FIDGET For I assure you, women are least masked when they have the velvet vizard on. (5.4 105-115)

Lady Fidget suggests an honourable reputation allows women the freedom to be dishonourable, to have secret affairs without ruffling husbands' feathers. Mistress Squeamish and Daisy Fidget take the argument a step further by claiming that the demeanour and trappings of modesty are the best means to an immodest end. To them, the appearance of chastity is simply part of the game of seduction, Restoration style. By their logic, no means yes: the look of honour actually signifies its opposite. In fact, the

more chaste, demure and upright a lady appears, the hotter and hornier she probably is, and the more blatant her invitation. It's easy to read this paradox as a deliberate provocation by Wycherley of the young aristocratic women in the audience, such as the Maids of Honour, who hoped that before too long their own honourable reputations would attract seemly aristocratic suitors.

Of course, Wycherley's ladies are by no means the first to call feminine modesty into question in this way. When Mistress Squeamish says that "coyness... is as much a sign of a kind woman, as a vizard-mask in the pit," she herself uses a linguistic "sign" which points to the popularity of this interpretation of female honour. She draws on a secondary meaning of the word "kind" often used in the libertine rhetoric of the period. Her "kind woman" is not virtuous, but "easy," sexually permissive. The echo of the more familiar usage of the word "kind" lingers to remind you of what this kind of "kind woman" is not. Mistress Squeamish also brings into this exposé on honour the material equivalent of this doubled linguistic sign: the vizard-mask commonly worn by play-going women during the Restoration. In For the Ladies, David Roberts offers two possible readings of the masked woman: "It is clear, on the one hand, women wore masks to the theatre with the intention of picking men up; on the other that the masks could occasion quite innocent... activity" (85). When Pepys

observes a masked woman enjoying repartee with an acquaintance at the theatre, he reinforces this sharp distinction between whore and chaste woman: "One of the ladies would, and did, sit with her mask on all the play; and being exceedingly witty as I ever heard woman, did talk most pleasantly [with the man beside her]; but was, I believe, a virtuous woman and of quality" (cited in D.Roberts 85). Unlike Roberts and Pepys, J.L.Styan fuses these opposing views. He regards the vizard as a necessarily whorish sign, whether or not the masked woman was "of quality":

[T]he prostitutes who frequented the playhouses themselves wore masks as the sign of their trade (their nickname was the vizards), and a woman of quality who went to a play in a mask was for all practical purposes choosing to compete with them for the attention of the men. (114)

It is this inescapably impure meaning of the sign of the mask that Wycherley's ladies promote. Daisy Squeamish quips that "women are least masked when they have the velvet vizard on:" a masked woman's lustful intentions and greed are written all over her face. Here Wycherley is pointing an accusing finger at all the women in masks in the audience--which would include a large proportion of the Maids of Honour--hoping to elicit a guilty blush behind each vizard.

So in Wycherley's world, women tend to immodesty. According to the play's logic, a woman who obviously protects her honorable reputation is practically confessing her dishonorable desires. The country wife herself provides an excellent example of how this equation works. Throughout the play, Margery Pinchwife learns (primarily from her paranoid husband's prohibitions) to lust after other men. At the same time, though perhaps not at quite the same rate, she learns to appear to be more modest than she is, to disguise herself, and to lie. But Wycherley does not altogether collapse the binary view of female sexuality in his play. Yes, the appearance of female honour is exposed as a sham. True, the key chorus of female characters are hypocritical sluts, and the country wife is a hypocritical slut-in-training. However, Alethea, who refuses to cheat on Sparkish, her silly fop of a fiance, serves as a powerful reminder of women's capacity for "real" virtue. Unlike the country wife, Alethea has never been ignorant of the common practices of the Restoration sex game. Unlike Lady and Daisy Squeamish and Mistress Fidget, she believes female honour is more than skin deep. Alethea's profound modesty is accentuated by the fact that she is paired initially with Sparkish, a partner ridiculously easy to deceive. She recognizes quickly that Harcourt is a far more appealing lover; but, though she clearly has the wit to carry out a secretive affair with the man she desires, she refuses to

betray her fiance's trust. Alethea may be the only evidence in the play that ladies are not inevitably duplicitous, yet she is a convincing example indeed. For the most part, Wycherley associates active female sexuality with excess, greed, vanity and duplicity: in Alethea he represents the ideal lady, the rare gem whose perfect honour only accentuates the frenzied, messy lust of the gaudy mass of women. Alethea's major function, ultimately, is to prove to the audience that most women don't measure up. And that's what everyone assumed the Maids of Honour were objecting to when they cried down The Country Wife.

A few weeks before the original production of The Country Wife was over, John Crowne's first Court masque was being rehearsed and revised. By rights, the honour of authoring a masque to be performed by the Court at Whitehall should have gone to the Poet Laureate, John Dryden. But Rochester, who had been fighting with Dryden, put in a good word for Crowne (Greene 205). Crowne's honour at having been selected was not unqualified however: he had been given "scarce a month" to complete this masque (237), and there were prickly compromises to be made. On the one hand, not only was Calisto to be performed very soon after Wycherley's play had closed, but the Maids of Honour were to play in it. Crowne must have been well aware that his masque would be viewed as a kind of rebuttal to The Country Wife: the

incriminating image of noble women left by Wycherley's chorus of nymphos had to be replaced in the Court's imagination by something a little purer. Furthermore, the Maids of Honour were to be joined by two Royal performers, the King's nieces, Mary, then aged 13, and Anne, aged 11 (222), who were slotted to play the central roles. These girls were very young, and they were Princesses in line for the throne: Crowne had to be especially careful not to compromise their noble virtue. On the other hand, Crowne's masque also had to suit the bawdy tastes of the libertine King. As Stephen Orgel explains, "[W]hatever a writer [made] of his masque, its function on the most simple level was always to honor the monarch"(20).⁵

This quandary, along with the time constraints he faced, clearly worried Crowne. What subject matter could possibly satisfy such disparate interests? In his preface to Calisto, when he discusses the process of selecting an appropriate storyline for the masque, he doesn't hide his anxiety:

I had but some few hours allowed me to choose [a subject]. And as men who do things in haste, have commonly ill fortunes, as well as ill conduct, I

5 The monarch "does not take part in the disguising itself." But "in a sense [the monarch] watches [him]self... is both actor and spectator, and to a certain extent the boundary between stage and audience has been removed" (Orgel 26).

resolving to choose the first tolerable story I could meet with, unhappily encountered this, where, by my own rashness, and the malice of fortune, I involved myself, before I was aware, in a difficulty greater than the invention of the Philosopher's Stone that only endeavours to extract gold out of the coarsest metals, but I employed myself to draw one contrary out of another; to write a clean, decent, and inoffensive play on the story of a rape... (237)

Crowne's tone goes far beyond the dictates of conventional humility, and the ostensible slapdashness of a would-be aristocratic man of letters. With his defensive stance, not to mention all those commas, he sounds breathless and utterly angst-ridden. But whether or not his plot choice for Calisto was truly as rash and unaware as he insists, there certainly was no ill-fortune in his decision to base his masque on the story, taken from Ovid's Metamorphoses, of Jupiter's rape of Calisto.

In the classical version, Jupiter accidentally meets Calisto, a Princess and one of Diana's favoured attendants, and becomes captivated by her beauty. Then taking on Diana's form, Jupiter approaches Calisto and rapes her (cited in Crowne 227). Crowne knew, and was repeatedly reminded, that under no circumstances was the Calisto of his masque, to be played by Princess Mary, actually to have her

modesty compromised (238). "[T]he danger was in assaulting [chastity]," he writes in the Preface,

I was to storm it, but not to wound it; to shoot at it, but not offend it; my arrows were to be invisible, and without Piles; my guns were to be charged with white powder; the bullets were to fly, but give no report.

(238)

So in Crowne's version Calisto's virtue remains intact: Jupiter claims he will rape her, but his attempt is thwarted.

This adjusted myth proved a clever way out of his predicament. After all, rape is really just the logical extension of the double standard which deems normal and proper a man who wants sex and a woman who doesn't. A play about an attempted rape ensures that the female character's honour is maintained, while offering the perfect opportunity for both male and female characters to play out their "normal and proper" roles. As Elizabeth Howe puts it in The First Actresses, "Rape [in Restoration drama] became a way of giving the purest, most virginal heroine a sexual quality" (43). The King and his courtiers would be able to identify with Jupiter's performance of sexual aggression and uncontrollable lust, and the Maids of Honour with Calisto's performance of incorruptible female modesty.

Though he clearly creates Jupiter as a reflection of King Charles's libertine values, Crowne never acknowledges

that the tinges of sexual violence in his masque were included to please this very important part of his audience.⁶ He's quite explicit, however, about having been drawn to the good PR potential of Calisto's character:

That which tempted me into so great a labyrinth,
was the fair and beautiful image that stood at the
portal, I mean the exact and perfect character of
Chastity in the person of Calisto, which I thought
a very proper character for the princess to
represent...(238)

Calisto is attendant to Diana, the goddess of Chastity. Another of Diana's attendants is Nyphe, "a chaste young Nymph, [and] friend to Calisto," which was Anne's role (248). Maids of Honour played a chorus of five more wholesome young nymphs, attendants in Diana's train. The fact that the story of Calisto afforded the Maids of Honour themselves a chance to take an active part in this heightened display of female virtue must have appealed to Crowne as well. And the obvious parallel between this role

6 In the first scene of the masque, Jupiter revels in the sexual variety his power position allows, telling Mercury:
We gods in all delights should share;
Besides, the loves by us embrac'd
Would kill a poor weak mortal, but to taste.
We know what pleasure love affords,
To heavy beasts and mettled birds;
Here and there at will we fly,
Each step of nature's perch we try;
Down to the beast and up again
To the more fine delights of man:
We every sort of pleasure try;
So much advantage has a deity (253).

in the masque and their real-life role as royal attendants would provide the Maids of Honour an excellent opportunity to transform their own image at Court.

So chastity is by no means an incidental theme in The Masque of Calisto. At every turn Crowne expounds on the nature of female virtue--especially Calisto's. In the first scene, Jupiter tells Mercury about his lust for Calisto (whose name he doesn't yet know), and the impossibility of "gaining" her: "She flies the very shadow of a man;/ She thinks it does her virtue stain,/ If she but sleep where one has lain,/ That she is of some purity beguiled,/ If she but taste the air of one defiled" (255). And it turns out that Jupiter is not exaggerating: Calisto's purity is so extraordinary that she believes she is "dishonour'd, and asham'd/ To breathe, but in the air, where love is named" (286). The goddess of chastity herself names Calisto the "chastest, most approv'd/ Of all that ever grac'd my virgin throng" (258), and later Diana claims the extent of Calisto's modesty is such that her very flesh is all but erased: "...no ill can her fair soul invade,/ Her whole composure is for virtue made,/ Her body in so pure a mould is wrought,/ Her very body may a soul be thought" (295). In case any spectator should still have cause to doubt Calisto's absolute purity, they only need refer to the masque's subtitle for confirmation that she is indeed "The Chaste Nymph"!

The centrality of Calisto's chastity to the Restoration masque is reflected in further changes Crowne makes to the classical story. In Ovid's version, as a result of Jupiter's sexual assault, Calisto has a son named Arcos. Jupiter's wife, Juno, finds out what has happened and punishes Calisto for the dishonour of having been raped (!) by Jupiter by turning her into a bear. Jupiter eventually saves her from this fate by making Calisto and her son into a constellation of stars (cited in Crowne 227). In the last scene of Crowne's version, a chastened and repentant Jupiter declares--in a manner entirely unbecoming a classical god--that he himself is "the greatest criminal," and announces that "[i]n pity to the world, [he] must remove/ [Calisto's] fatal eyes, out of the reach of love." He then entreats a still sparkingly virginal Calisto along with, not her illegitimate child, but her chaste sidekick Nyphe to "[a]ccept the small dominion of a star" from which they both "may dispense/ With cooler beams [their] light and influence" (320). In Crowne's masque, Calisto's "fort of chastity to buy, to break,/ Heaven [is] too poor, omnipotence too weak" (314): the paragon of female modesty finally triumphs over lustful Jupiter.

Of the twelve characters involved in the central drama of The Masque of Calisto, eight are professional virgins. For obvious reasons, Crowne makes most of his female characters as earnest as Wycherley's are sly, as overflowing

with virtue as Wycherley's are with illicit desires. Yet like Wycherley, Crowne draws attention to his representation of female modesty by setting up an important contrast. Just as Alethea's honour highlights the flamboyant immodesty of Lady and Daisy Fidget, Mistress Squeamish and Margery Pinchwife in The Country Wife, similarly Psecas, a nymph gone wrong, serves to highlight the others' purity in The Masque of Calisto. Psecas is also an attendant to Diana. Yet from her first appearance, she voices her objection to Diana's cloying self-righteous purity. After her sarcastic aside--"Our youth I find we wisely waste,/ And are to mighty purpose chaste"--Psecas reveals a plan to bring shame on the whole train. Mercury has been chasing her through the woods lately; she knows that he wants her. She intends to encourage his advances and then make the knowledge of her less-than-pure status public: "I'll swear we are dissemblers all./ From men we only seem to fly,/ To meet 'em with more privacy..." (258).

The rumour that Psecas tries to spread--that the goddess of Chastity and her train are "dissemblers all," exploiting their spotless reputations in order secretly to satisfy immodest desires--echoes that paradoxical theory of female modesty presented by Lady and Daisy Fidget and Mistress Squeamish. The difference is that whereas most of the female characters in The Country Wife really do capitalize on their seeming modesty only "to meet [men] with

more privacy," it is perfectly clear to Crowne's audience that the paradox of female virtue that Psecas wants to popularize is entirely inapplicable to the central characters of the masque. Almost all of them are genuinely by-the-book honourable--actively, even obsessively, resisting any contact with men or with male gods. Psecas herself is the only dissembling nymph, but Psecas doesn't feign modesty the way Wycherley's nymphs do. She's an expert whore: what she feigns is desire.

Like Diana, Calisto and the rest of the wholesome nymphs, Psecas is a caricature. She is Crowne's portrait of the immodest woman as megalomaniacal dominatrix.⁷ Along with her obvious entertainment value, Psecas' character serves an important moral purpose within the central plot of The Masque of Calisto. Through her, Crowne tears apart Wycherley's paradox of female modesty, reinterpreting it as a blatant lie that is simply part of a deluded bid to undermine the innate strength of honourable women. Psecas is the foil for female modesty. When her stratagem fails, the unsullied virginity of Calisto, Diana and her virtuous

⁷ Psecas doles out her "favours" in such a way that Mercury can never forget who's boss:

I could descend to smile now if I durst
But that's too great a favour at the first
And to rash youth 'tis an unhappy fate,
To come too early to a great estate.
Much wealth, much honour, I design my slave,
But I the management of all will have. (292)

train is easily reestablished, and even Jupiter is humbled; when Psecas is defeated, the Maids of Honour are vindicated.

Of course, Wycherley couldn't resist a retort. In his next play, The Plain Dealer, produced and published the following year (1676), he mocks both the Maids of Honour's scorn for The Country Wife and the inflated innocence of the characters they played in Crowne's masque. He dedicates his comedy to Mother Bennett, a celebrated brothel madam:

[T]his play claims naturally your protection,
since [my writing] has lost its reputation with
the ladies of stricter lives in the playhouse; and
(you know) when men's endeavours are
discountenanced and refused by the nice, coy women
of honour, they come to you... (284)

The protagonist warns the audience in the Prologue that this comedy offers "Pictures too like, the ladies will not please/ They must be drawn too, here, like goddesses" (28-29). And in the second act, there is a hilarious discussion about the crying down of The Country Wife. Wycherley has his character Eliza--played, not coincidentally, by Mrs Knepp, the same actress who had played Lady Fidget--revive that paradox of female modesty, entangling the Maids of Honour and their public reaction to Wycherley's earlier comedy in its brutal circular logic:

I... think that as an over-captious fool at a play, by endeavoring to show the author's want of wit, exposes his own to more censure, so may a lady call her own modesty in question, by publicly cavilling with the poet's; for all those grimaces of honour, and artificial modesty, disparage a woman's real virtue, as much as the use of white and red does the natural complexion... (2.1 386-393)⁸

It's impossible not to laugh along with Eliza at this idea that the Maids of Honour have protested too much. The morally simplistic central plot of Calisto does seem more than a little heavy-handed in light of Wycherley's playful and biting satire. Yet for all Wycherley's teasing, The Country Wife and Calisto appear to be more alike than not in their reductive representations of female sexuality. There are silly or greedy or just plain evil girls who "do it," such as Lady Fidget, Daisy, Mistress Squeamish, and Psecas; and there are elegant, intelligent, and determined girls who don't, such as Alethea, Diana, Calisto and the chaste nymphs. Neither play presents an appealing portrayal of

⁸ Eliza's argument relies on a popular extension of the double standard in which a sexual significance is ascribed "to any penetration, either from within or from without, of a woman's 'private circle'" (Goreau 150). For a woman, to express an opinion openly is seen as the equivalent of sleeping around. According to this value system, the Maids of Honour's public objection to The Country Wife is the undeniable evidence of their immodesty.

"immodesty:" there's no female character who, like the lusty Lady Barbara Castlemaine, gets the sexual satisfaction she wants on her own terms. In both dramas, the monolith of female modesty seems equally impenetrable.

But is it? In the last part of this chapter Eve Sedgwick's analysis of aristocratic Restoration heterosexuality from Between Men will help me penetrate the modesty monolith and better understand its foundation in both Wycherley's play and in The Masque of Calisto. While Sedgwick's analysis of The Country Wife focuses on Wycherley's depiction of male sexuality, the conclusions she draws have implications for Restoration ideologies of female sexuality as well. In "The Country Wife: Anatomies of Male Homosocial Desire," a chapter in her book Between Men, Sedgwick rejects the common assumption that sex-obsessed Restoration noblemen were motivated by lust alone. In her view, the seduction games in The Country Wife have little to do with innate sexual urges. Sedgwick argues that heterosexual relations in the play are necessarily triangular, and thus homosocial. In one way or another, the female characters are linked to, and possessed by, male characters. When other men pursue, provoke or seduce these women, they do so in order to elicit some kind of reaction--jealousy, respect, admiration--from the men who possess them. "The given of The Country Wife," Sedgwick insists,

is that cuckoldry is the main social engine of the aristocratic society depicted. "To cuckold" is by definition a sexual act, performed on a man, by another man. Its central position means that the play emphasizes heterosexual love chiefly as a strategy of homosocial desire. (49)

Sedgwick exposes the homosocial desire at the heart of all of the heterosexual connections in the play, with Horner as its central representative.⁹ As Sedgwick points out, "Horner's very name" which refers to the medieval symbol of the cuckold "makes explicit that the act of cuckolding a man, rather than of enjoying a woman, is his first concern" (55). Horner's edge over the other men comes from his insight into the psychology of male homosocial desire. He has learned through previous experience as a renowned rake that when he's an obvious rival to other men, his access to their women is severely restricted. Pinchwife's absolute terror of his wife making Horner's acquaintance shows how intimidating this libertine identity can be to another man. When he takes on the social position of a eunuch, Horner is

9 The relationships between Sparkish and Alethea, and Pinchwife and Margery, for instance, represent extremes of this kind of desire. Sparkish "loses" Alethea to Harcourt because he is so fixated on getting Harcourt's friendship and respect that he practically pushes his fiancée into Harcourt's arms, telling him, "I'll be divorced from her sooner than from thee" (3.2 166). Pinchwife, on the other hand, is so consumed by the potential rivalry of other men that he ends up making his ingenuous wife all too aware of her power within the system of male traffic in women.

given opportunities to act as a kind of chaperon, and thereby to get close to other men's women. "Because in one register [Horner] withdraws from the role of rival to that of object," Sedgwick writes, "he is able in another register to achieve an unrivalled power as an active subject" (57). By feigning disinterest in "the game," even seeming incapable of playing, Horner ensures he can score with more women, more cleverly and more often. His true goal, however, is primarily homosocial: as Sedgwick points out, Horner's "pursuit of Margery Pinchwife begins... when he first learns that she is Pinchwife's jealously guarded bride" (56), and it ends the moment she makes the mistake of assuming "that because he wants to cuckold her husband, he must therefore want her" (56).

Women's status within these homosocial transactions between men is ambiguous: they are "at the same time objects of symbolic exchange and also, at least potentially, users of symbols and subjects in themselves" (50). Of all the female characters in the play, Lady and Dainty Fidget and Mistress Squeamish best illustrate women's equivocal position in this system. On the one hand, these women are users of symbols. Just as Horner has carefully constructed his own image as a eunuch, Lady and Daisy Fidget and Mistress Squeamish have learned to manipulate the marks of female modesty to draw men's attention. They are also aggressive in selecting as their lover/sex-object, Horner,

an "un-man" whose proximity to them, not coincidentally, can actually boost their modesty rating.

On the other hand, the socio-sexual status of these women is seriously limited by what Sedgwick calls cognitive leverage. Cognitive leverage was an extremely important factor in determining a person's status both in the world of Restoration comedy as well as in Court society: "Hierarchy was established not according to the values of virtue or vice, but of intelligence and stupidity, elegance and inelegance..." (Styan 126). The noblewomen in Wycherley's play are somewhat aware of their status as objects in the homosocial transactions between men--hence the obsession with their honorable reputations. Nevertheless, the secret knowledge of all the ins and outs of male homosocial desire gives "the ambitious, active man" a significant power over these "only peripherally existent" women (Sedgwick 65). Until the last act of the play, Lady and Dainty Fidget and Mistress Squeamish each believe that Horner is faking impotence so he can sleep with her alone (5.4 155-161), proving all three of them in some ways no less naive of Horner's real intentions than Margery Pinchwife. The female characters in Wycherley's play don't quite "get" the degree to which they are objects. No matter how ingenious, sneaky or sexually sophisticated, their potential as subjects is seriously undermined because they are cognitively out of the loop.

Furthermore, the limited cognitive leverage of Wycherley's women means that they are unable to develop their own homosocial desire. Within the male-centred system that Sedgwick has uncovered, women could feasibly become equal players if they established their own system of transactions between women. As one feminist theorist puts it, "Without a female [homosocial] economy... a way to represent herself, a woman in a heterosexual encounter will always be engulfed by the male [homosocial] economy" (Gallop 460).¹⁰ This female "economy" would have to mirror the men's and would involve the possession and exchange of men, as well as serious rivalry and homosocial energy between women. Of course, economic and social conditions at the time were such that it was the rare woman who was financially independent enough to have a real sense of control over her man.¹¹ Yet Horner--as well as Wycherley himself--provide evidence to the fact that in aristocratic Restoration circles even those who had "little money" (5.4 127) could achieve a superior status through cognitive

10 Gallop uses the term "homosexual" economy. I have substituted "homosocial" because I believe the principle is more or less the same. Both words imply a fundamental orientation towards those of the same gender--though of course "homosocial" removes Gallop's implication of sexual activity.

11 A more detailed analysis of gender, wealth and social status will be included in the next chapter.

mastery and wit.¹² Wycherley's nymphos, however, are neither financially autonomous nor extremely witty. Each lady actively selects Horner as her plaything; but none tries to "claim" him, and none fights for exclusive rights to her sex object. A decisive point in the ladies' rejection of homosocial desire is in the last scene of the play, when they find out that Horner has been a "gallant in waiting" to all three of them. A homosocial response would entail a degree of jealousy between the women, like the one we see exhibited between Pinchwife and Horner. Or, the ladies could carry out a deliberate and delicious exchange of the object of desire, in the manner of Sparkish with Harcourt. Or, if one of the ladies were truly masterful, she would find a witty way of attaining a smug, not-altogether-secret "victory" over the other women, in the way Horner does over all the men in the play. But none of Wycherley's nymphos opts for any of the above. In fact, the moment in which they discover they've been unwittingly sharing their lover is remarkably uncharged:

LADY FIDGET [pointing to Horner] This is my false villain.

MISTRESS SQUEAMISH And mine too.

DAINTY FIDGET And mine.

¹² It was wit, not blood or money, that gave Wycherley status enough to enter the Court clique and to play sexual rival not only to Buckingham, but the King himself. (See page 14.) More discussion of this issue follows in Chapters Two and Three.

HORNER Well then, you are all three my false rogues too,
and there's an end on't.

LADY FIDGET Sister sharers, let us not fall out, but have
a care of our honour... the jewel of most value and
use, which shines yet to the world unsuspected, though
it be counterfeit. (5.4 161-170)

Wycherley's noblewomen are wholly conscious that while
female modesty serves an important social function, it is
not intrinsically meaningful. And they have even proven
themselves adept at manipulating the symbols of modesty.
Yet they do not resist it. The ladies' decisive act of
compliance--"let us not fall out, but have a care of our
honour"--finally wipes out any significant subject potential
they may have had.¹³ Modesty in The Country Wife is thus

13 My reading of this line, this scene, and of these
characters in general is in direct contrast of that of Helen
M. Burke. In her article "Wycherley's 'Tenditious Joke':
The Discourse of Alterity in The Country Wife," Burke
regards the ladies' pact not to "fall out" as
an ironic parody of the [male] homosocial contract, in which
men agree to exchange women rather than engage in open
warfare. [The ladies] become "Sister Sharers" to ensure
their own social survival and to maintain their cognitive
ascendancy over men, though they recognize what they are
protecting [their honour] is a fraud (237).

I disagree with Burke's view that the men agree to
exchange women rather than engaging in "open warfare." I
would argue in fact that the "warfare" between men is the
major source of conflict in the play: there is definitely a
combative edge to Pinchwife, Fidget, Squeamish and Horner's
various exchanges--I see Horner in particular as a major
strategist. Contrary to Burke, I believe that in refusing
to play competitively, the ladies absent themselves from the
game. I also wonder how Burke can argue that these ladies
have cognitive ascendancy over Horner. Not only does Horner
possess first-hand knowledge that their honourable
reputations are a sham, but he is aware, long before any of

neither an inevitable nor an essentially feminine quality. It is a socially constructed mechanism by which men ensure that they can continue to have their special and exclusive fun together--even if it often involves competition, rivalry and conflict. By keeping women endlessly, neurotically, reflecting on themselves, modesty obstructs the path to the development of homosocial desire between women, and of a fullblown female sexual subject position.

In my opinion, Sedgwick's take on female honour also suggests a different way of interpreting the Maids of Honours' objection to The Country Wife. Women are both socially and sexually irrelevant within the male homosocial domain of Wycherley's play. Is it possible that the aristocratic ladies in the audience were more deeply unsettled by women's general insignificance within Wycherley's world than by the intimation that they are easy and sleazy? The Maids of Honour had happily attended the King and Queen at many equally racy comedies (D. Roberts 107); it's unlikely that all of a sudden they began to view themselves as the custodians of moral virtue, as Wycherley suggests they do. I believe that the Maids of Honour's crying down of The Country Wife really had nothing to do with Wycherley's female characters' shady morality--and everything to do with their limited status and power. And I

the ladies, that they are "Sister Sharers" of his body.

believe that Crowne intuitively understood the noblewoman's perspective. Although The Masque of Calisto is a play as thematically obsessed with chastity as The Country Wife is with promiscuity, I will argue that Crowne's play offers a far more subversive take on female honour than does Wycherley's and, moreover, that by counterbalancing male homosocial desire with a female equivalent, Crowne's play presents a freer and more flexible image of female sexuality during the Restoration.

Crowne sets the stage for Calisto's story within the familiar context of male homosocial desire. In the space of three lines at the beginning of the Act I, Mercury announces that he is in love with one of the nymphs in Diana's train whom he has been following through the woods. Then he spends the next fifteen lines agonizing over Jupiter's potential rivalry:

This Jove I've oft a wandring met:

He makes my jealousy grow strong;

What does he do out of his heav'n so long?

I'm sure on some fair Nymph he has design.

And all my fear is lest it should be mine.

Can no soft beauty be embrac'd,

But he must still desire a taste? (251)

Crowne's audience must have been immediately engaged: Not only does Mercury's speech pick up on the central thematic thread of cuckoldry from The Country Wife, his description

of the King of the Gods' greedy lust also specifically evokes Charles II's libertine ways. For performers and audience members alike, Mercury's simultaneous fear of, and subconscious desire for, sex with one of the King of the God's lovers must have resonated with their own incestuous entanglements within the Court circle, or with some of the more gossiped-about intrigues, such as the one involving Barbara Castlemaine, the King, and her plethora of lovers.

While this male homosocial perspective is consistent with that of The Country Wife, Crowne soon destabilizes the familiar male-centred territory. In the next scene, the audience is introduced to the goddess of chastity and her train. Diana is lavishing praise on Calisto, while Psecas listens in with increasing envy which she relates to the audience in a series of asides. First:

Oh! with what pride! and feign'd neglect of art
This royal favourite storms our goddess' heart,
Conquers it too, and rules her power divine,
Whilst all our merits unregarded shine. (256)

A moment later:

Our poor deluded goddess is undone;
This favourite has her heart and empire won. (256)

Then:

Oh! how for praise [Calisto] spreads a spacious net!
Not one regard to us can passage get:
Our virtues will not go for virtues long;

I neither will, nor ought to bear this wrong. (257)

Finally Psecas divulges her plan to sabotage the innocent reputation of Diana's train by getting caught "in the act" with Mercury, then by entangling Calisto and Nyphe as well. Psecas makes it perfectly clear, however, that her seduction scheme has nothing to do with wanting Mercury: what she wants is to strengthen her own bond with Diana. As she later confesses to Diana, "Having some kindness for you, I design'd/ To disabuse you, set your judgment right [regarding Calisto and Nyphe],/ And honour you with being your favourite..." (319). (Once again, the sexual implication of the word "kindness" during the Restoration should not be overlooked here.) The relationship between Psecas, Diana and Calisto is charged and complex right from the beginning of the play. Interestingly, unlike the male characters in The Country Wife, Psecas, Diana and Calisto are quite conscious of and candid about their obsessions with each other: their brand of homosocial desire is more obviously tinged with the Restoration conventions of female friendship (à la Katherine Phillips). By upping the stakes between these nymphs, Crowne disrupts the classical narrative frame of Jupiter's seduction of the virgin Calisto: this is primarily a story of jealousy and passion between women.

Psecas provides an extreme example of female-female desire in the play: her sexual misadventures with Mercury

are only motivated by the desire to be Diana's "favourite." However, like Sparkish or Pinchwife in The Country Wife, she doesn't seem to have full cognitive mastery over the subtleties of the homosocial exchange. Psecas understands that her feelings for Diana need a heterosexual outlet, yet she isn't aware of the particular angle on heterosexuality by which her homosocial desire for Diana could be most effectively expressed. That's where Calisto--and chastity--come in.

The intense connection between Diana and Calisto is at the heart of the masque's plot. From their first appearance it's obvious that Diana adores Calisto, and that the feeling is mutual. They gush superlatives. Calisto to Diana: "Divinest power! Can any pleasures be/ Compar'd to innocence and chastity?/...Only in [your] shades true ease I find" (256). Diana to Calisto: "I never such a victim had before,/ Crown, beauty, youth, what all the world adore,/ You bring at once in sacrifice to me,/ The offering exceeds the Deity" (256).

The ardent relationship between Diana and Calisto both parallels and distorts the paradigm for male homosocial desire set out in The Country Wife in two important ways. First of all, despite the intensity of the bond between the women, the sexual element of their desire is sublimated. The fear/fantasy is played out in the scene in which Jupiter, disguised as Diana, approaches Calisto, confessing

your merits breed

In my lost heart a strange uncommon flame:

A kindness I both fear and blush to name;

Nay, one for which no name I ever knew,

The passion is to me so strange, so new! (268)

The scene is ostensibly heterosexual: Jupiter is after all a male character who only uses a female disguise so as to minimize the apparent threat to Calisto's virtue. Yet because Jupiter is not only pretending to be Diana but is actually being played by a female performer, the homoeroticism of this attempted seduction is unmistakable. Lesbianism in this scene is surreal, an unknown illness hovering on the brink of being diagnosed and understood. And it seems Calisto is at least subconsciously aware of the possibility she too will "catch" this strange disease. "What kindness can I shew? what can I do?" she asks, insisting, "Stand off, or I shall be infected too" (270). As in The Country Wife, homophobia plays a role here in defining the boundaries of homosocial desire. But in The Country Wife, overstating the homosocial game is just foolish. When Sparkish tells Harcourt, "I'd be divorced from [Alethea] sooner than from thee" (3.2 166), the audience is meant to laugh. In Calisto, however, the prospect of a woman taking her homosocial orientation too far is cloaked in great danger and mystery. Crowne teases the audience with this erotic nightmare for a few minutes--

about two and half pages of script--then shakes them awake, though this dark lesbian charge certainly lingers as a subtext of Diana's and Calisto's relationship.

The second way that female homosocial desire in Calisto creates a distorted reflection of the paradigm of male homosocial desire set out in The Country Wife is in its means of expression. Like the men in Wycherley's play, the nymphs act out their homosocial desire through heterosexual relations, in this case, through the exchange of men. The difference is--and this is what Psecas hasn't worked out--that this exchange is carried out not by engaging in sex with men, but by actively rejecting it. As such, Calisto and Diana's relationship is fully developed only when Calisto has been given the chance to repel Jupiter's advances. The first time Calisto actively rejects Jupiter is in the homoerotic scene I've just discussed. After pleading for "a cure" for what ails him/her, Jupiter-as-Diana eventually grabs Calisto. Calisto shows a dart and threatens, "Loose me, or this into my heart shall go" (270). Then Jupiter's spirits take Calisto captive so that he can have his way with her--"pleasure longs to have his pleasure tried" (272). Calisto escapes him once more, not by physical force nor by threatening self-annihilation again but by using her intelligence, her cognitive mastery over the situation. By inciting Juno's jealousy, Calisto turns Jupiter's wife fiercely against him. Juno says that if she

is thus humiliated by Calisto, she will have Jupiter removed from his "celestial" throne. Jupiter, ultimately more concerned with his social and political power, admits defeat and Calisto is freed, chastity intact (285).

Believing her to be Jupiter in disguise once again, Calisto and Nyphe end up piercing Diana's flesh with their darts, making her bleed (299)--an act loaded with symbolism. Diana is devastated, "Ah! Princess! do you thus my love requite?/ Do I displease you then in being too kind?" (299)¹⁴ But when she discovers that Calisto and Nyphe are still pure, untouched by male hands, she makes it clear that Calisto is even more desirable than she was before: "I must reward her for my wound.../ Happy the moment when my blood was spilt!/ Their glory shall exceed their past disgrace./ Bring 'em in triumph here to my embrace!" (314-15) Now the homosocial bond between Calisto and Diana can be formally sealed:

So well, that I am better than before!
My courage greater, and my pleasure more!
If I have any pain, 'tis that which flows
From the excess of joy, your fame bestows:
The mark of which, upon my arm I bear;
the only jewel, I am proud to wear. (316)

¹⁴ There's that word again! Juno also seems to recognize an "abnormal" sexual pulse in Diana's feelings for Calisto when she scoffs, "[Diana's] love to virtue is but a pretence--/ She is unchaste herself"(303).

Calisto's virtue has been put to the test, she has passed with flying colours and, at Calisto's hand, Diana's virginal blood has been spilled. Finally, dramatically, the goddess and the princess "consummate" their homosocial desire.

On the one hand, in Calisto, just as in The Country Wife, modesty does play a role in the male homosocial domain: it fires up the men, and heightens women's appeal as sexual objects. It is certainly no coincidence that Jupiter and Mercury have cast their lustful eyes on chaste nymphs: "Your killing beauty is one great offence," Jupiter tells Calisto. "But your chief sin is too much innocence" (271). Nor is it coincidental that Jupiter becomes increasingly entranced by Calisto the prouder and more resistant she is, claiming Calisto "gives me greater pleasure in her pride/ Than ever Juno did in being enjoy'd" (283). Yet the intensely homosocial domain of Diana, Calisto and the nymphs is the real focus of the play. Here, modesty serves a more powerful, contrary purpose. Because this homosocial exchange is carried out, paradoxically, through the rejection of a man's advances, the objects of exchange, specifically Mercury and Jupiter, are forced into a completely symbolic role: they don't even have to get "used" sexually to be exchanged! As such, you could say that Crowne's male characters are more thoroughly diminished by the homosocial transaction than are Wycherley's nympho ladies. If you add to this the fact that all the players

within the central plot of Crowne's masque were women or girls, you get the impression the play is really a female separatist fantasy, in which the traditional notion of honour is turned inside out, redefined as the means by which women can express and reinforce their profound orientation towards and desire for each other. By cleverly juggling the terms and conditions of conventional Restoration morality with the Maids of Honour's obvious need for alternatives to those conventions, Crowne succeeds in reconstructing chastity as a site of resistance. For both those Maids of Honour who performed in the masque and those aristocratic ladies who watched it, Calisto must have been an exhilarating experience. Female sexuality was released--if only temporarily--from its narrow place within the patriarchal double bind and the male homosocial exchange.

Even for powerful, audacious women like Lady Barbara Castlemaine, there was no avoiding the Restoration obsession with female modesty. Yet, as I have shown, its meaning and its function within gender relations were not fixed in stone. In fact, Lady Castlemaine's liaison with the beautiful, desirable Frances Stuart provides a juicy case study of how transgressive so-called chastity could be. The King had tried to seduce Stuart, but she rejected him over and over again, insisting that her honour must be preserved. One idle night, according to biographer Allan Andrews,

Barbara Castlemaine "began a frolic with Frances that they should act a charade of getting married":

Their companions joined in and played out a mock marriage with priest, book and ring. Then they cut the ribbons from bride Frances' dress, put Barbara and Frances to bed, brought them their sack posset and threw the bride's stocking to see who was next to be married... (84)

For a while, Stuart and Castlemaine slept together regularly. Yet, despite her obvious willingness to go to bed with Castlemaine, Frances Stuart was notorious at Court not for her lesbianism, but for her virginity.

Less daring ladies had other means of controlling the significance of female virtue. One important way aristocratic women influenced the way female sexuality was represented was by capitalizing on their power as cultural consumers, as theatre-goers--and their collective critical opinion was clearly a force to be reckoned with. The original run of The Country Wife was cut short by the scandal caused by the Maids of Honours' outrage. Crowne's Masque of Calisto, on the other hand, enjoyed repeated, and very popular, productions at Court (D. Roberts 110).

**Truewit and The Whores Rhetorick:
Status, language and sexual identity during the Restoration**

Lady Catherine Sedley, born in 1657, grew up surrounded by licentious Restoration aristocrats. Her mother was an heiress, the former Lady Catherine Savage, and her father was Sir Charles Sedley, one of Rochester's cohorts and a well-known Court wit. Lady Sedley was bright, sophisticated and, the sole legitimate heir to her family fortune, she was loaded. As a young woman, Sedley served as Maid of Honour to the wife of James, the Duke of York, became James' mistress, and remained so even after he became King.¹ When, at the age of 38, she decided to marry a veteran Scottish soldier, Lady Catherine Sedley had accumulated money, titles, and sexual adventures galore (N.Roberts 141).

In her day, Sedley was branded with the same label as Lady Barbara Castlemaine. She was known to have been promiscuous; the Restoration popular imagination, obsessed as it was with female honour, could only interpret such behavior in one way--Sedley was a courtesan. Apparently, even her father, Charles, one of Rochester's bosom buddies, "was as scandalized and as furious [with her behavior] as if

¹ When asked why she believed the King favoured her, Lady Sedley answered, "It cannot be my beauty because I haven't any, and it cannot be my wit because he hasn't enough of it himself to know that I have any" (cited in Earle 144).

he had himself lived the purest of lives and had upheld the most prudish of principles" (Longueville 77).²

Like Castlemaine, Sedley is stuck with the whore label today. In her study of prostitution in Western society published in 1992, Nickie Roberts delights in Sedley's story. Roberts, herself a sex-trade worker, sees prostitutes as the original feminists, "the first to say 'No' to patriarchal ownership" (xi), and she believes prostitution is and was an excellent alternative to marriage for thinking women seeking economic, sexual and emotional autonomy from men. It's not surprising, then, that in her chapter on "The Almighty Curtezan" in Restoration London, Roberts lingers on Sedley's case. Lady Sedley was one of those rare ladies who was financially secure: there was nothing desperate about her. Why did she choose to "sell" her body? Roberts implies it was just for the fun and freedom inherent in the prostitute's role.

In the last chapter, I showed that the meaning of female honour during the Restoration could be subverted, and that female sexuality in general could be extricated from its cramped and stifled position within the male homosocial

² On at least one occasion, Lady Sedley identified herself with the prostitute. Late in life, at the court of George I, Sedley ran into the Duchess of Portsmouth, who had been one of Charles II's lovers, and William III's mistress, the Countess of Orkney. "By Jove!" Sedley blurted out. "Who would have thought that we three whores should have met here?" (Fea 141-42) I can't help wondering, though, whether this became one of her most oft-cited witticisms simply because it reinforced a popular stereotype of sexually aggressive women.

domain. Now I'm going to consider whether the identity of the prostitute really fits those witty, money-savvy ladies who actively transgressed prevalent notions of modesty. While I accept Roberts' premise that prostitutes past and present were not and are not simply powerless victims of sexism, the term prostitute does not in my view accurately encompass the lusty noblewoman. In order to prove that it makes sense to resist the common labelling of such women, in this chapter I will explore the Restoration ideology of the whore in some depth.

The Whores Rhetorick, a two-hundred page instruction guide for the working girl published in London in 1683, puts a new spin on the (then) increasingly popular conduct manual.³ In it, a seasoned and somewhat decrepit old prostitute named Madam Creswel initiates a young girl from a family of ruined royalists, Dorothea, into the art of prostitution. Creswel offers Dorothea a brief, engaging and, as she sees it, irresistible introduction to all of the tricks of trade:

I will in a few days discourse illustrate unto you the Whores Rhetorick, in such a plain and easy method, and paint it in such lively and charming

3 Bridget Orr offers an interesting piece of the book's history. In the year of its first publication, The Whores Rhetorick "was regarded and consumed as an erotic text and prosecuted as such" (202). However, the book was published once more the following year, and was not censored again.

colours, that you will be constrained by both profit and pleasure, to learn, remember and apply to use my short but sufficient documents. (19)

These "short but sufficient documents" will serve as basis of my investigation into who the Restoration prostitute was, what she did, and why.⁴

Throughout this investigation, I'm going to compare the discourse of prostitution with another prominent sexual discourse which is commonly associated with certain men of this period, and especially with John Wilmot, the Earl of Rochester--that of libertinism. My point, ultimately, is to propose a serious answer to the question I posed at the beginning of the previous chapter: "Isn't it possible that at least some of the time, ladies like Castlemaine [and Sedley] saw themselves as players as slick and suave and elegant as the Earl himself?" In other words, I want to problematize the neat and tidy segregation of promiscuous women and promiscuous men into separate camps.

In some respects, my goal defies the obvious. Historically, the whore has been viewed almost exclusively as a female identity, and the libertine has been viewed as male. During the Restoration, boys and, to a lesser extent,

⁴ In this chapter, I base generalizations about Restoration prostitutes on my reading of The Whores Rhetorick. I'm certain that a more focused study on prostitution during this period would reveal that the experiences, attitudes and self-concepts of sex workers ranged as widely as their incomes. (See page 79, footnote 14.)

men sold sex too (Traub 63), but because the vast majority of prostitutes were and had been female, the identity itself was feminized, as it remains today. Roberts, for instance, who acknowledges in Whores in History the presence of male prostitutes in a variety of historical societies, still sees her book as "the history of the Bad Girls" (xii). Similarly, the libertine identity has been highly gendered.⁵ In his transhistorical study of "The Properties of Libertinism," John Grantham Turner looks only at male examples of Restoration libertines, ignoring the active female libido altogether. And Michael McKeon calls the aristocratic rake a "paradigmatically masculine" figure (309).

Yet I believe there must have been a good deal of crossover if not in how licentious women and men were perceived by others, then at least in how they interpreted their own attitudes and exploits: then as now, sex was largely an activity which men and women engaged in together, and then as now, women and men alike absorbed and shaped those discourses of sexuality which circulated around them. In this chapter I'm going to call into question the way the sexual ideologies of the libertine and of the prostitute have been so rigidly gendered through three distinct arguments. First, I'm going to look briefly at some

⁵ The OED entry for "libertine" explicitly mentions that it is a term "rarely applied to a woman."

background to The Whores Rhetorick to show how the lives of prostitutes and of libertine wits intersected, both during the Restoration and before. Then I'll consider similarities in the construction of these two identities in more detail. Finally, I will explore the significant differences between rakes' and whores' conceptions of their sexuality, showing how, more so even than gender, shifting notions of status were at the heart of these differences.

A quick glance at the historical context of The Whores Rhetorick exposes several crucial links between the lives of libertines and the lives of whores.⁶ The apt naming of the prostitute/teacher, Madam Creswel, points to a very important connection. Mrs Cresswell, as her clients knew her, was a real-life London brothel keeper who had worked in partnership with Mother Bennett (Greene 123) and who, two years before The Whores Rhetorick was first published, had been "convicted after above thirty years practice of bawdry" (cited in Palmer 75). Wycherley had dedicated The Plain

⁶ Turner, who aims to come up with a "cautiously maximalist" definition of libertinism, explains that Seventeenth-century usage [of the term "libertine"] varied as much as that of twentieth-century critics and historians. The libertine is sometimes interchangeable with, and sometimes distinguished from, the Priapean, the spark or ranter, the roaring blade, the jovial atheist, the cavalier, the sensualist, the rake, the murderous upper-class hooligan, the worldly fine gentleman, the debauchee, the beau, the man of pleasure, and even the "man of sense." (77)

Dealer to Mother Bennett, and she and Cresswell and their ladies were also intimately acquainted with Rochester and the rest of his gang (Greene 123). So there's the first link: Restoration libertines fraternized with prostitutes, and often made use of their services.

Speculation about the authorship of The Whores Rhetorick reveals another connection between Restoration whores and rakes. Sometime before his death in 1644, Ferrante Pallavicino wrote La rettorica delle puttane composta conforme li precetti di Capriano, a book similar to The Whores Rhetorick in its title, theme, and in its dialogue form. In their article on the authorship of the Restoration publication, Irvine and Gravlee point out that "adapting and anonymously issuing various Continental works for British literati and common folk was prevalent until late in the seventeenth century" (525). They believe, it is likely that an English writer, perhaps a member of the Court Wits, became familiar with Pallavicino's La rettorica and found it a useful grounding for commentary on the oldest of professions as practised in London during the period. (525)

The Court Wit/author in question wasn't the only one to choose to write about the practices of London whores: the pamphlets, plays and poetry of the period, Rochester's

especially, abound with real and fictional prostitutes.⁷

This, then, is the second point of intersection: Restoration libertine wits didn't just know whores in the biblical sense; their expertise in this area was also a significant source of literary inspiration.

The third link is an expansion of the previous one; and it takes us back in time to the early sixteenth-century and Pietro Aretino, the originator of the libertine mode (Turner 75). Some one hundred years before Pallavicino's La rettorica was published, Aretino wrote his Dialogues, an archetypal libertine text.⁸ The first two sections of Part Two of Aretino's book--"in which Nanna teaches her daughter Pippa the art of being a whore," and "in which Nanna tells Pippa all the vicious betrayals that men wreak on women"--directly mirror the themes and style of the two parts of The Whores Rhetorick; Aretino's book must have been an important source for Pallavicino. It's obviously not mere coincidence that these libertine texts from three different periods

⁷ Moehlmann's concordance to Rochester's complete poems lists 51 references to the words "bawd," "mistress," "punk," "slut" and "whore" in one form or another.

⁸ Translator Raymond Rosenthal sums up Aretino's ideology like this:

His men are goaded into love-making by gross and vulgar lust; his women do not have even this excuse, but do it out of simple greed, for the money. That lust and that greed provide the basis for the deceptive, entrapping machinery of the social world in which money, ambition and cynical power rule. (7)

Certainly this same ideology still resonated with licentious London circles during the Restoration.

focus in detail on the art of prostitution. It seems that, from its beginnings, the discourse of the libertine has always hinged on that of the whore.

The last connection I want to touch on has to do with the etymology of the words "courtesan" and "courtier." The Whores Rhetorick suggests that courtesans should borrow from Court wits' attitude and style:

The wise Italians by Cortegiano and Cortegiana understand the Courtier and the Trading Lady, whereby intimating that a Whore ought to be furnished with all the Courtly qualities, she ought to be a Female sycophant... (33)

However, the English roots of "courtesan" and "courtier" in fact do more than "[intimate] that a Whore ought to be furnished with all the Courtly qualities." According to the OED, both "courtesan" and "courtier" derive originally from the masculine Italian "cortegiano." At the time of its first citation in English in 1405, "courtesan" was a gender-neutral term referring to "one attached to the court of a prince," and was a perfect synonym for the slightly older word "courtier." The connotation of "courtesan" which is familiar to us today--"a court-mistress, a woman of the town, a prostitute"--came into English around the turn of the seventeenth century via a brief stint as "a woman attached to the court" (following that unwritten rule which assigns a sexual significance to any term associated only

with women). Given the history of the two terms, it seems likely that even after their meanings became distinct, the identity associated with "courtesan" retained the flavour of its earlier synonym: the habits and behaviours of courtiers and courtesans continued to have much in common. So while the author of The Whores Rhetorick is right to compare the subservient attitude of these two identities, the history of English shows that the point can be taken further still. That the Restoration "Trading Lady" and the courtier both work hard to curry the favour of their social superiors is no fluke: many of their schmoozing techniques were actually learned and developed within the same English court culture.

The boundary between the libertine and the whore is already beginning to crumble... Frequenting whores and writing about the ins and outs of whoredom were an integral part of the development of the discourse of libertinism: libertines relied on the whore's marginalized status to build their own reputation as subversives. At roughly the same time, like their courtier contemporaries, certain prostitutes cultivated the art of ingratiating themselves to their clients by observing, and participating in, hierarchical relationships at Court. The bond between rakes and whores runs deeper still, however. Because of the way their lives intersected during the Restoration and before, libertines' and prostitutes' sexual attitudes and behaviours

also merged. In the next part of this chapter, I will continue to break down the gender barrier between these two identities by examining the way their shared preoccupation with sex was, for both, tied to two other major preoccupations: money and wit.

That prostitutes focus on profit above all is something of a truism. Creswel teaches her protegee not to be a snob. "You must forget the distinction of Gentleman, and Mechanick...", she tells her, for "money removes all stench, from the meanest action, by vertue of its purging quality" (51). Despite her attempt to contradict it, Creswel ends up reinforcing the idea that the whore's sexuality really is essentially stinky, sullied by her greed. The economic awareness of the Restoration libertine, on the other hand, was and is often overlooked: his sole *raison d'être* was supposedly pleasure. The then-popular Hobbesian notions that "the soul was a function of the body" and that "sensation and desire were first causes" obscured the possibility that within their sexual relationships libertines acted on impulses which were rather more calculated than instinctive (Greene 205).⁹ The Earl of Rochester, in particular, is assumed to have been the ultimate pursuer of sensual pleasure--sex with girls, sex with guys, booze, anything that felt good. As Samuel

⁹ Incidentally Hobbes was no faraway philosophical figure at the time, but had tutored the young Charles II while in exile on the continent.

Johnson put it, Rochester "blazed out his youth and health in lavish voluptuousness" (cited in Rochester 1). The graphic decadence of his writing and his death of a venereal disease at the age of 33 only help to reinforce this image. But lavish and voluptuous though he may have been, Rochester was poor (for an Earl): he did have "a modest estate and fortune, mainly through marriage and royal bounty," but had no renewable income, no interest (Greene 101). Like Dorothea of The Whores Rhetorick, Rochester belonged to an established royalist family who had fought for the King during the Civil War and then gone into exile. Given his relative poverty, and his frequent literary objections to monogamy, one can safely assume that Rochester's much talked-about elopement with Elizabeth Mallet, the "heiress of the west," was motivated in large part by greed, or at the very least, by financial "convenience."¹⁰ Charles Sedley also snagged a Lady with an enormous inheritance. Similarly, it was not just a stroke of luck that brought Wycherley into contact with the Duke of Buckingham, one of Castlemaine's lovers and his future patron: he must have been aware that his affair with Lady Castlemaine would improve his chances at gaining access to the Court wits

¹⁰ Greene summarizes Rochester's view on the subject of monogamy: "The restraining of man from the use of women, except one in the way of marriage, he thought unreasonable impositions of the freedom of mankind" (123). "Against Constancy," "Against Marriage," and "Love and life" are three of his poems which deal explicitly with the hazards of committing to a single partner, though the theme emerges frequently throughout his work.

whose financial and literary support he desperately needed. Creswel explains the art of selective monogamy to Dorothea like this: you can allow one man to "make a monopoly of your Wit and Beauty" only under one condition--"if his estate be as large as his flame, and his generosity equal to both" (61). Like well-trained whores, Rochester, Sedley and Wycherley obviously weren't blind to the estate, generosity--and/or useful connections--that their well-selected sexual unions would bring.

While libertines were not always upfront about their reasons for pursuing certain sexual relationships, they were happy to talk endlessly about all aspects of wit--including the connection between wit, pleasure and sex. In Rochester's poetry alone there are 68 references to "wit," and as he writes in one of his prologues, "Wit's business is to please" (Rochester 105). Wit's ability "to please" was multifaceted. There was the sexual power of wit in its more general form, really a synonym for intelligence, for being "in the know." Horner's secret sexual dominance in The Country Wife, for instance, stems largely from his wit--or "cognitive mastery" as Sedgwick calls it--that is, his understanding of others' motivations combined with his ability to use signs (words) to create a version of reality in which his homosocial desire and his libido can take charge. Similarly, Rochester knew a lot about what was going on, and why, behind the scenes at Court. By

satirizing and then circulating the gory details of these "affairs of state" in his poems and prose, he tapped into wit-power. Rochester's cognitive mastery over the Court scene, like Horner's over the male characters in the play, ensured his superior value in the homosocial circuit.

On a more intimate level, libertines saw wit as a kind of foreplay for the mind. Restoration comedies, which both evoked and provoked courtiers' licentious relationships, celebrated the art of repartee. Dryden claims in his "Essay of Dramatic Poesy" that "the greatest pleasure of the audience is a chase of wit kept up on both sides and swiftly managed" (cited in Lamb 32). In The Country Wife, a play itself full of chases of wit, Horner extols the power of language to attract: "methinks wit is more necessary than beauty, and I think no young woman ugly that has it, and no handsome woman agreeable without it," and Pinchwife confirms wit's dangerous sexual quality with characteristic paranoia, "What is wit in a wife good for, but to make a man a cuckold?" (1.1 443-448). In "A Familiar Dialogue betwixt Strephon and Sylvia," Rochester elaborates on the power of wit to seduce and arouse. Sylvia tells Strephon that while his sexy talk turns her on, she'd rather "swive" with Colin who, with his "mightier dart," is physically better equipped to "quench [her] raging fires" (Rochester 78-79). She doesn't want Strephon to leave right away though, because before getting down to it, she requires "[Strephon's] wit

[to] raise [her] strong desires;" "You shall [please] my ear," she says, "he please my appetite." But it's Strephon who gets the last word, scoffing at the lesson taught by "women's prostituted schools"--"That men of wit but pimp for well-hung fools." His reaction to the fact that his lover opts for bodily satisfaction over that offered by a dynamic mind is rather snooty. Contrary to the common view that rakes' sexuality was about bodily lust pure and simple, libertines clearly recognized the importance of wit both in gaining sexual power, and in stimulating the sexual imagination.

Some Restoration writers theorized that wit was a male quality, that female tongues neither could nor should be too agile (Behn TFC 4). But, by virtue of their fallen and therefore less than feminine state, prostitutes were exceptions to this rule (Todd 33). It was generally acknowledged, for instance, that the sex appeal of the Restoration's best loved whore, Nell Gwyn, was due not just to the "power of [her] beauty," but equally to the "greatness of [her] mind," and the "charms of [her] tongue" (Behn TFC 4). In fact, as the title of The Whores Rhetorick implies, the most critical skill a prostitute had to learn if she wanted any kind of success in the business was the ability to charm and manipulate her clients through language. Creswel makes it very clear to Dorothea that she must cultivate sexual wit of both types: she must understand

the big picture--possess "a moving intelligence" (222)--and she must be verbally seductive in the moment as well. The whore-heroine who Creswel admires the most is a woman for whom "nature had taken more care in furnishing the inside," the "Mistress of more wit than beauty" (102). In her instruction around this more general type of wit Creswel draws on an analogy which was commonly used by libertine men. "Reading men is the great work of [your] life" (35), she tells her pupil. And she instructs Dorothea to "read men more than books"(85). The Earl of Newcastle had remarked of Charles II, "he reads men as well as books" (cited in Palmer 39), and Wycherley gave the same trope a sexual--and sexist--slant in The Country Wife with Harcourt's line: "Mistresses are like books. If you pore upon them too much, they doze you and make you unfit for company; but if used discreetly, you are the fitter for conversation by 'em" (1.1 226-229). Harcourt's use of the women-as-books metaphor conveys the smug message that men are effortlessly superior to their female playthings. Similarly, Creswel encourages Dorothea to see men as texts to be "read" because she believes that a sophisticated insight into men's desires is not only the key to keeping them coming back for more, it is also the key to maintaining a sense of emotional and intellectual superiority over her clients: "The Whores Rhetorick is nothing else, but the art to... move the minds of men, who falling into their nets, so

become the trophies of their victories" (36). Like the libertine, what the whore's after, ultimately, is cognitive mastery.

Perhaps not surprisingly, The Whores Rhetorick places an even greater emphasis on the more intimate type of wit--the power of words to arouse and seduce a lover. Creswel insists that the whore "give her Client a fine story for his Money" (72). After all, verbal foreplay might reduce the amount of time the prostitute had to work her body. (Perhaps a less taxing use of her tongue?) Given the depth of the whore's understanding of the male client/text, she can skilfully adapt the story to meet the needs of "the present lover":

You must be furnished with great variety of words, and even those that are most familiar and trivial, to enable you to entertain your Lovers on all subjects: still complying in the choice of the matter with their various tempers. This part of Rhetorick is necessary to fit you on all occasions, to use ambiguous expressions, and for ornament sometimes, synonymous terms; to equivocate, vary and double, according to your fancy and the present circumstances: all which do extreamly enhance the value of your words; and add a particular gallantry to your discourse. A

whores language is the lascivious dialect, is ever
to please the present lover...(43)

According to Creswel, words are the supreme aphrodisiac. Like rakes, whores made an effort to "read" their lovers carefully, and took pride in "the gallantry of [their] discourse." Both prostitutes and libertines were equally conscious of the remarkable power of language in inciting desire.

So not only is the libertine's identity historically embedded in that of the whore, and vice versa, but in terms of their tactics and goals too, whores and libertines appear to be cut from similar cloth: both relied on their wit to get sex, and both used sexual relationships as a means to social or economic security at least some of the time. Yet while there were significant similarities in the attitudes and behaviours of rakes and whores, it seems doubtful that the sexual self-concepts of people as different from one another as Rochester and Mrs Cresswell were one in the same. But exactly how and why did they see themselves differently? Gender clearly played a part in shaping the way each conceived his or her sexuality. The reign of the double standard meant that unlike promiscuous men, promiscuous women rarely escaped public scrutiny: as I have shown, even noble ladies who were known to be sexually adventurous were consistently referred to as whores. The double standard

must have had a huge psychological impact on all women, and my analysis will certainly take it into account. I doubt, though, that The Whores Rhetorick, which purports to give the inside scoop on Restoration prostitution, accurately represents the sexual exploits of aristocratic women such as Sedley and Castlemaine. I will argue that prostitutes' and libertines' respective social positions had an even greater impact than did gender in the way they each made sense of wit and sex, two of the preoccupations they ostensibly shared.¹¹

As Michael McKeon explains in "Historicizing Patriarchy," ideas of socioeconomic status were in flux during the late seventeenth-century. Although pervasive assumptions about the permanence of the social order and the monarchy had been challenged during the Civil War, the idea that a person's social worth was a matter of blood was still going strong. At the same time, the alternate view that a person's worth was determined by internal virtue and competence was taking hold, and becoming more and more prevalent as the bourgeois public sphere emerged (Seward 28). McKeon uses the terms "status" and "class" to distinguish between the two notions:

¹¹ I realize that this is something of an artificial separation--gender is always classed, class is always gendered. But because I want to avoid a simplistic gender division of these identities (and for the sake of clarity) I am going to focus mostly on status here.

[T]he status assumption that birth automatically dictates worth was replaced by a class conviction that birth and worth are independent variables. The standard of class criticizes the biological essentialism that consists in locating personal value in the blood line, demystifying the "naturalness" of aristocratic honor as an arbitrary social construction. (303)

Despite its ancient history, it appears that prostitution-- which was considered a kind of trade at the time--was aligned with the newer of these trends, "class," while libertinism, a more recent though essentially aristocratic discourse, was aligned with the belief in a genetic hierarchy, "status." The next part of this chapter will focus on the way these different concepts of social structure shaped rakes' and whores' respective notions of language and reality, and thus their respective sexual self-images.

First of all, I want to consider how libertines' notion of status conditioned their understanding of the relationship between language and reality. Whatever financial "hardship" his rich wife had helped him overcome, Rochester was part of a very elite group: he was an Earl, a member of the merry gang of courtiers, and one of Charles II's favourites. Charles Sedley, a Lord, belonged to this ultra-select group too. In his article defining

libertinism, John Grantham Turner highlights the implications of this elevated social status. Libertines exploited their advantaged position, claiming a right to break laws and social codes which they expected others to obey: "Libertines... believe in laws to govern 'the rabble'; for themselves, however, they claim a special privilege or grace which allows them, or even compels them, to break those laws" (80). Paradoxically, the rules of upper-class civility against which rakehells rebelled, were "precisely those rules that [gave] them the license to be uncivil" (81).¹² Turner compares the libertine's relationship with the sovereign to a family relationship: "Libertine rebelliousness is a kind of dramatic testing procedure, like a child's testing of the boundaries of parental tolerance" (81). For Rochester, whose father had fought alongside the King and had died when his son was only ten, "the child analogy is almost literally true," Turner notes (81). It's

¹² Turner provides examples of libertine religious improprieties which perfectly illustrate this fundamental ambivalence in their belief system:

Sir Charles Sedley and the future Earl of Dorset simulated the Eucharist before an enraged crowd, washing their penises in wine, distributing excrement to the "congregation," and preaching in mock-scriptural tones about the own sexual virtues. One of the frolics of the Earl of Wharton... included defecating on the alter of a church. And Boswell... seems also to have associated the religious and the salacious: he experienced an overwhelming urge to lead the minister of the New Kirk past the scene of his first sexual conquest in London... (79-80)

As Turner points out, the drama of these sacrilegious debaucheries depended on "deeply internalized religious beliefs" (80).

no stretch to see Rochester's outrageous antics as the attention-seeking schemes of a spoiled child. Likewise, the King's reaction was that of an indulgent parent struggling to play the disciplinarian: though Rochester "repeatedly provoked the king to the point of exercising sovereign wrath," he generally succeeded in "[melting] the royal displeasure... with some irresistible witticism" (Turner 81).

This relationship with Charles explains not only the Court wits' apparent exemption from ancient codes of politesse, but also their exemption from the use of civil language at Court. Rochester, in particular, pushed the envelope with his remarkably foul mouth. Even the King was a regular target of his satire. "Verses for which he was Banished," for instance, mocked the sovereign's sexual gluttony:

...The pricks of kings are like buffoons at Court:
We let them rule because they make us sport.
[Charles] is the sauciest that e'er did swive,
The proudest preemptoriest prick alive.
Whate'er religion or his laws say on't.
He'd break through all to come at any cunt.
Restless he rolls about from whore to whore

A merry monarch, scandalous and poor... (Rochester 80)

William Empson rationalizes Rochester's audacity: "The reason why he could talk in this absolutely plain man way

was that he had been a great lord and a favourite of the King" (cited in Rochester viii). Indeed the title of "Verses for which he was banished" suggests that Rochester's provocative, precarious yet essentially charmed relationship with the King is not simply a symptom but also a "cause" of his rudeness--the potential reaction of the monarch is central to his delight in deriding him. At the heart of this rebellious, irreverent attitude, of course, was the feudal notion that one's status was a matter of blood. Libertines still felt so fundamentally entitled to their superior social position that their subversive stance was not nearly as risqué, or risky, as it appeared. Most libertine scandal-mongering including Rochester's blatant ridicule of the "merry monarch" was like bungee jumping: he may have got a huge thrill from each leap/potential fall from grace, but he knew he'd inevitably bounce back to the top. The blood line ensured that.

Though this blood rule was etched into the libertine's identity, there was an exception--or rather, an amendment--to it which stemmed from the fascination with wit. Most of the people who had the time and inclination to develop a reputation for wittiness were aristocrats, but now and then someone from outside the Court clique caught their attention. If this person developed a reputation for clever come-backs, or wrote brilliantly, in short if he was a "truewit," he could join their club. Interestingly, the

privilege of the "truewit" was invested with the same kind of inevitability as was social status: while anyone consciously working at wit was going against the proper order of things (not only an impossible but also a somewhat grotesque proposition), a person "born with it" could qualify for an spot within the elite gang. This is Wycherley's story. Having entered the aristocratic homosocial arena through Castlemaine, he was given a helping hand into the in-group by Rochester who recognized that Wycherley was a great playwright, a sparkling conversationalist, and "as much in love with Wit, as he was with [Castlemaine]" (cited in Sedgwick 61). He appears to have easily assimilated notions of "natural" and "unnatural" wit, as evidenced by his scathing attitude toward Sparkish, the classic fop of The Country Wife. Sparkish's desire for acceptance by Harcourt and Horner is totally transparent. During his first appearance on stage, Sparkish announces, "[A] wit to me is the greatest title in the world" (1.1 295). But seconds later, he bungles his own attempt at repartee, unconsciously exposing his ineligibility for this title: "I think wit as necessary at dinner as a glass of wine," he quips, "and that's the reason I never have any stomach when I eat alone" (1.1 309-310). In his book on the Restoration fop, Andrew Williams refers to Sparkish as a "witwould" (48-49). Horner clearly concurs. Disgusted, tells his buddies, "Your noisy pert rogue of a wit [is] the

greatest fop, dullest ass and worst company" (1.1 295-296). Sparkish's greatest faux-pas are being "noisy" and "pert"--he's just so obvious. Nor does Wycherley show any pity for his character, not even when he loses his fiancée to Harcourt. Wycherley is by no means especially hard on his foppish creation, however. As Harold Brooks explains, the battle "between true wit and good breeding against the pretence of them or the want of them" is in fact one of the two principal conflicts in the Restoration comedy of manners, adding that it is this conflict "which justifies the description of them as comedies of manners" (201).

This elitism around wit enhanced and was enhanced by a corresponding absolutist view of reality for the libertine. Many contemporary critics claim that Rochester's writing presents such a variety of outlooks that it is hard to know exactly where the man stood, or if in fact he held any unflappable beliefs.¹³ Yet, as Marianne Thormahlen points

¹³ Contemporary critics often read the libertine's multiplicitous viewpoints as proto-poststructuralist. In A Martyr for Sin, Kirk Combe writes:

By doing everything they can to minimize the dependability of the author and the narrator, and to maximize the role of the reader as an interpretant [forger of the signified], Rochester's writings place the reader in an acute hermeneutical predicament--and, perhaps, trap. Since his works themselves offer no certainty, the reader is left, hopelessly, to look for certainty himself. Any he finds (and I use deliberately the masculine pronoun), upon reflection, will prove to be contrived. (20)

Combe proposes "that Rochester seeks to create indeterminability and textual chaos as a means of disrupting the particular regime of truth in which he finds himself" (21).

Similarly, Robert Markley argues that Wycherley's plays

out in her article "Rochester and Jealousy: Consistent Inconsistencies," there is a clear pattern to what Rochester rails against: "what he attacks--in satires, lampoons, burlesques, and lyrics--can be easily summarised in the following terms: stupidity, vanity, and insincerity; or folly, pride, and hypocrisy" (217). As the term "truewit"--as opposed to "halfwit," "witwould," and "lackwit"--implies, libertine wits felt that they had access to absolute Truth while others did not. In The Plain Dealer, for instance, Wycherley creates an authorial mouthpiece in the character of Manly, a "plain dealer" who tells it like it is. In the preface to this play, Wycherley challenges his society's hypocrisy, complaining that "truth is now a fault as well as wit," and positing that in the theatre (the second home of the Court wits), more than in the real world, "plaindealing" is honoured and celebrated: "Where else but on stages do we see/ Truth pleasing, or rewarded honesty?" he protests (13).

"exhibit an insistent, embattled anti-authoritarianism that questions the ability of any discourse--including the playwright's own--to stabilize moral, social, and ideological values" (139). He believes Wycherley "turns the syntactical and semantic conventions of late seventeenth-century theatre to his own ironic ends, calling attention and implicating his audience in the open-ended process of defamiliarizing the language of wit" (139-140).

I don't disagree with Combe or Markley: Rochester and Wycherley do "[call] into question the very legal and cultural foundation of [their] society" by "resisting [their] sovereign" (Combe 23) through their writing among other things. However, for the purposes of my argument, it is much more significant that both Court writers believe that they are cognitively masterful enough to engage in intellectual treason, and recognize implicitly that they are socially well-established enough to do so.

And later Freeman concurs, "telling truth is a quality as prejudicial to a man that would thrive in the world as square play to a cheat or true love to a whore" (1.1 239-241). The scarcity of truth-tellers in London is one of the play's central themes.

Libertine wits appear to have transferred a sense of aristocratic entitlement into the belief that they had a special skill in discerning between honesty and dishonesty, truth and hypocrisy. In turn, this self-assurance played itself out within the libertine sexual self-concept. Libertine sexuality was no simpler than anyone else's. I've already shown the influence of both economics and wit on their relationships, and in the last chapter I discussed another important factor in the rake's sexual identity: homosocial desire. Though she doesn't use Sedgwick's expression, Thormahlen concurs that "Jealousy [of other men] is central to what has been referred to as 'Rochester's sexual politics,'" and that in general "'Rochester's sexual politics' is a far more intricate business than it has been made to appear" (213). Turner also talks about libertines' deep-seated ambivalence around sex:

In sexual relations... there prevailed a deep uncertainty as to which of two criteria applied: the model of law... or the social norms of the beau monde... It is perhaps this ambiguous, liminal condition, even more than the obvious

physical pleasures--which are often disparaged as
"slimy drudgeries" or wearisome "obligations"--
that attracts the libertine to the mundus
sexualis. (82)

Though obviously it was anything but straightforward,
libertines' self-declared role as born fighters of hypocrisy
and insincerity meant that their favourite obsession could
be portrayed in straightforward terms. In Rochester's poem
"A Satire Against Mankind," for example, the speaker offers
a simple rationale for his indulgence of sensual urges:

Our sphere of action is life's happiness,
And he that thinks beyond thinks like an ass.
Thus, whilst against false reasoning I inveigh,
I own right reason, which I would obey:
That reason which distinguishes by sense,
And gives us rules of good and ill from thence;
That bounds desires, with a reforming will
To keep 'em more in vigour, not to kill.
Your reason hinders, mine helps to enjoy,
Renewing appetites yours would destroy.
My reason is my friend, yours is a cheat,
Hunger calls out, my reason bids me eat;
Perversely, your appetite does mock;
This asks for food, that answers, "what's o'clock?"
(27-28)

The speaker justifies gratifying bodily urges as they come up by calling on Hobbesian logic, "Hunger calls out, my reason bids me eat." This direct cause and effect relationship between hunger and eating, he calls "right reason" clarifying that his is "[t]hat reason which distinguishes by sense." Here both meanings of "sense" are evoked: primarily "physical sensation," but also "good judgement." The speaker defines his "right reason" in contrast to that of an unspecified other, "you," some non-libertine, whose reason is "a cheat" because it defers not to physical sensation but to those dogmatic and puritanical rules of propriety imposed by a limited law-bound society. The libertine speaker believes himself vastly superior to the "false reasoning" ass who is more concerned with the proper hour for dining than with sating his appetite. Despite the multitude of subconscious forces at play around libertine sexuality, Rochester's treatise on happiness confirms that, cognitively at least, libertines were able to draw on a philosophy in which sensual escapades were seen as reasonable, unmuddled by shame, guilt or ambivalence.

In its quirky way, The Whores Rhetoric relates a whole other story about the Restoration prostitutes' sexual self-concept. I'm going to tell it here in relation to that of the libertine by tracing a parallel argument--beginning with prostitutes' notion of status, moving to how this shaped

their ideas of language and reality, and ending with an interpretation of how these beliefs implicated themselves in their view of sexuality. Whereas libertinism was an aristocratic discourse based around the Court, prostitution was ubiquitous. Working girls belonged to almost every socioeconomic stratum of society, and marketed themselves anywhere and everywhere--in brothels, on the street, in public houses, and throughout the theatre.¹⁴ Perhaps even more striking than whores' general social inferiority to rakes was the difference between their ideas of how social positions could be determined. Restoration law considered a whore's offer of sex for money a legitimate business proposal--"The state made no systematic attempts to legislate for [the] control or suppression [of prostitution]" (N.Roberts 182)--and the whore saw herself as a professional, a salesperson of sorts. As Bridget Orr observes in "The Feminine in Restoration Erotica," "economic agent" is one of two dominant tropes used to represent the prostitute in The Whores Rhetorick: she is continually

¹⁴ The women who worked in the playhouses exemplified the whole range of social positions represented by whores. The elegantly dressed "vizards" were the most expensive working girls in the audience. They serviced the aristocratic men in the pit and boxes. Moderately priced prostitutes cruised for clients in the middle gallery where the growing group of "Cits" could be found. Poor street whores in the upper gallery were called "bulkers." Of roughly the same social position were the orange-girls who "sold playbills, oranges and their bodies throughout the auditorium" (N.Roberts 140). The female performers on stage also often had sideline careers as prostitutes. Acting didn't pay well and the theatre provided them with a great deal of exposure and lots of rich potential clients (N.Roberts 140-146).

figured "as a... trader, shopkeeper, merchant--or, later, as a bawd, as an usurer or broker" (204). In identifying with merchants and the burgeoning bourgeoisie, prostitutes were aligning with the emerging notion of class, which linked a person's social value to her internal worth as well as her work ethic. A poem of the period sums up this increasingly popular ideology: "What is't to us, what Ancestors we had?/ If Good, what better? or what worse, if Bad?.../ For Fame of Families is all a Cheat,/ 'Tis Personal Virtue only makes us great" (cited in McKeon 304). While libertines believed that they'd be guaranteed places in the uppermost echelon of society no matter what they did, prostitutes understood their place in society to be intricately connected to their effectiveness as business people. As Creswel puts it,

As Trade and Traders increase, so must industry
and ingenuity: and there are at this day, such a
great plenty of Whores, that to live well, and to
continue in that state, it is necessary to
understand more than what is vulgar and common.

(36)

Another related contrast between the two identities was that central to the whore's social position was an awareness of the possibility of "moving up." For every whore there was a chance, albeit a slim one, that she would catch some wealthy man's eye and move up the socioeconomic ladder a rung or two. So the thinking whore familiarized herself

with social customs that could distinguish her from her "vulgar and common" sisters. "I approve mightily of neatness in a Whore, as well as a luxurious magnificence," Creswel tells Dorothea, "because in these you make her agree with a Lady of quality and reputation" (110). According to the aristocratic elite, it was practically impossible for commoners to "pass" as members of that select group from which they were genetically excluded. (As I have already explained, for a literary "truewit" such as Wycherley to be welcomed into the Court circle was an unusual occurrence.) Yet ironically aristocratic fascination with the essential "inferiority" of everyone else actually afforded some prostitutes real opportunities for gaining in socioeconomic status. Asserting their elitist right to disregard status boundaries, libertines and other courtiers who could easily afford the company of a vizard got a special thrill from "slumming" it now and then with a cheap whore. Nell Gwyn, who worked her way from orange-seller to the King's principal mistress, may have the most spectacular rags-to-riches story of the period, but Nickie Roberts claims that "she was by no means the only poorly-born girl who succeeded in carving out a place for herself among the wealthy and privileged in Restoration society" (150).

In The Whores Rhetorick, Dorothea's growing recognition of the possibility of gaining social status through her new profession surfaces in a dream in which she casts herself as

an absolute monarch who toys with sycophantic, masochistic animal-serfs:

In this Throne, I thought I saw my self seated with a regal Scepter in my Hand, and a Crown of Gold on my Head: round about me there stood almost as great a variety of Beasts as were said to be contained in Noah's Ark... in tormenting all these I fansied my self mightily pleased; I took singular delight in beating some and pricking others, in pulling the Peacocks Trains, and the Feathers from the other Birds: all which methought they suffer'd with marvellous patience, without any sign of anger; nay the Beasts lickt me from top to Toe, shewing marks of content in being thus cruelly treated... (131)

Dorothea has profoundly absorbed Creswel's assurances that her intelligence, insight, innovation, and an ability to work hard will take her far, raising her above not only other women of her social position, but even above those moneyed men who will be her clients.

The whore's concept of herself as a business person meshed very well with the emerging notion that one's internal worth determined one's social position--and provided a much-needed psychological boost for the whore. However, when gender is layered into this equation, it becomes obvious that this developing class ideology was

something of a mixed blessing for the prostitute. On the one hand, "no male could dream of rising from the gutter to the court" (N.Roberts 150) in the way that select female prostitutes could.¹⁵ On the other hand, because these women were equating their social position with their personal qualities, the significance of their sexual immodesty was heightened. Whatever increasingly-valued work habits they possessed, prostitutes had given up the most celebrated female virtue, chastity.¹⁶ As a result they faced a fundamental contradiction: the more hard-working and successful a whore was, the lower she fell on the modesty scale. Unlike the aristocratic rake, whose status position was in no way called into question by promiscuity, a prostitute's essential "immorality" threw a wrench in her identification with the newer notion which aligned social position with inner worth. Libertinism was "quintessentially masculine": because of the way the double standard privileged male sexuality, libertine looseness only

¹⁵ See Chapter Four for a discussion of Beau Wilson, a male exception to this rule.

¹⁶ An aside on the link between female virtue and the new class ideology: McKeon suggests that the Restoration notion of female honour in fact originated in the concept of the "natural" superiority of the nobility, and its transfer from the socioeconomic group to the gender group was an effect of the decline of aristocratic ideology. "The idea of female virtue--the radical internalization of male honor, " McKeon writes, "may be understood as one consequence of early modern cultural efforts to replace aristocratic notions of value" (313-14).

intensified this classification. Whores, by contrast, though usually female, were in no way feminine.

In The Whores Rhetorick, Creswel tackles this contradiction with bravado, attempting to extricate prostitutes from the detrimental gender binary by creating a whole new gender category: "Whore." She informs her pupil, "a Whore is a Whore, but a Whore is not a Woman; as being obliged to relinquish all those frailties that render the Sex weak and contemptible" (144). Creswel compares the process prostitutes must undertake to free themselves of their gender to that of the nun:

I can now only desire thee not to fancy thy self for the future any thing of a Woman, save what craft and fraud may seem essential to the Sex. Agreeably to a young Female that is cloystered up in a Monastery, who has renounced the World, puts on a new dress, new manners, new thoughts, and who is become (as the Lawyer has it) a person dead in Law so you must now at your initiation in this profession divest your self of all Womanish conceits, abandoning that weakness and pusillanimity that renders many of our Sex... the object of mens charity and contempt... (221-222)

Significantly--and this is why the nun-analogy works particularly well--what the difference between women and whores boils down to for Creswel is sexual pleasure.

Shallow women feel it, smart whores don't. "[T]he married Women, Widow, or superficial Maid...do not obey the dictates of interest, but prostitute themselves meerly to gratifie their libidinous appetites" (41), while "a Whore ought not to think of her own pleasure, but how to gratifie her Bedfellow in his sensitive desires: she must mind her interest not her sport" (145). Creswel maintains that like all good merchants, and unlike ordinary, libidinous women, the prostitute should only have eyes for her "interest." Here Creswel is twisting around the double standard to create a whole new gender binary: conventional women (and men) are slaves to their gushing lust, while whores are rationally focused on their own financial advancement. The constant reiteration of the trope of prostitute as economic agent throughout The Whores Rhetorick seems to arise from this desire to replace the prostitutes' gender identity with her class identity.

But if Creswel has invented the gender category "Whore" in order to allow the conscientious prostitute to classify herself, as easily as any hard-working man, as a business person of exceptional inner worth, she is not very successful in the end. However empowering this new class ideology appears, the self-alienation it entails is even greater. The whore's inability to identify fully neither with women nor with other traders plays itself out in her notion of language and reality, and in her sexual self-

concept. The only part of womanhood that Creswel demands her pupil retain is "what craft and fraud may seem essential to the Sex." Whereas libertines railed against insincerity and hypocrisy, and viewed the expression of their cognitive mastery as "truwit," the prostitute's position forced her to embrace pretense. She exploited language to create her feminine role in the scene of the sexual encounter. Fixated inwardly on socioeconomic advancement--the only absolute--wit became for the prostitute merely a means to these ends, devoid of any genuine significance. When Creswel coaches Dorothea on the art of linguistic "seduction," she is intensely aware of the deceit and hypocrisy it involves:

Invention is principally necessary in this Art....
to impose probabilities, or even things utterly
false, as certain, and true. A good memory is
requisite to avoid contradictions, and those
inconveniences, the repetition of the same frauds
and artifices would infallibly produce.(39)

The "Rhetorick" of the book's title is thus extremely suggestive. While the very popular Restoration term "wit" does come up often, the idea of rhetoric is central to the perspective on language presented by The Whores Rhetorick. Both nuances of the word are intended, not only "the art of using speech to persuade, influence or please," but also, and more importantly for my argument, spoken or written discourse characterized by "excessive ornamentation or

contrivance" or that "pretends to significance, but lacks true meaning."¹⁷ The libertine notion of "truewit," discourse that is profoundly incisive and utterly uncontrived, corresponded perfectly with what Hobbes calls the four "Speciall uses of Speech" as enumerated in The Leviathan (25). By contrast, the first three of Hobbes' four "Abuses of Speech" may as well be written into the whore's job description--with the third abuse in bold:

First, when men register their thoughts wrong, by the inconstancy of their signification of their words; by which they register for their conceptions, that which they never conceived; and so deceive themselves. Secondly, when they use words metaphorically; that is, in other sense than that they are ordained for; and thereby deceive others. Thirdly, when by words they declare that to be their will, which is not. (25-26)

Just as their elite and absolute notion of language and reality was reflected in the rake's sexual self-concept, the whore's understanding of language as essentially rhetorical, deceitful, was mirrored in the way she made sense of her sexual affairs. There was sharp split between what was going on in the prostitute's mind and body, and the rhetorical reality she was continually inventing and reinventing for her clients. Yet it didn't make financial

¹⁷ Definitions from Collins Concise English Dictionary 1992.

sense for the whore to waste time trying to understand her own experience during sex, her single aim was to put on a good show. Creswel counsels her protegee to foster "a secret antipathy against Men" (156). And any woman who has faked an orgasm will relate to the whore's typical sexual encounter as Creswel describes it:

You must not forget to use the natural accents of dying persons, as my Heart, my Life, my Soul, I Dye, let us Dye together, and the like which imply a counterfeit, if not a real sense. You must add to these, ejaculations, aspirations, sighs, intercision of words, and such like gallantries, whereby you may give your Mate to believe, that you are melted, dissolved, and wholly consumed in pleasure, *though Ladies of large business are generally no more moved by an imbrace, than if they were made of Wood or Stone.* (202 my italics)¹⁸

¹⁸ The author of the Epistle Dedicatory of The Whores Rhetorick shows how for "ladies of large business" the pendulum of promiscuity swings full circle, back to chastity:

Your Lusts and Carnal affections are wholly mortified...[:] surely you have in this particular, out-done the severest Moralist, or the most Holy of the Primitive Fathers... (A5)

Of course this is classic sexual satire--comedians today are still getting mileage from juxtaposing images of sensual indulgence with images of religious repression. Ironically though, the whore's contradictory relationship to pleasure depicted here reinscribes her in the conventional gender role as the ultimately chaste, and therefore feminine, woman.

Striving to avoid the personal pleasure that would reduce her to ordinary womanhood, and would distract her from profit-making, the whore yet had to convince her customer that she was in the throes of passion. The prostitute's trade thus necessitated an intense self-division.

The Ladies Calling, published ten years before The Whores Rhetorick, represents the psychic split required by sellers of sex in even darker and more violent terms:

An impudent woman is lookt on as a kind of monster; a thing diverted and distorted from its proper form... [Impudent women] must commit a rape upon themselves (force their own reluctancies and aversions) before they can become willing prostitutes to others. (cited in Wintle 144)

Without access to a discourse which prioritized her own enjoyment, a whore faced repeated psychic, if not physical, violation. Her sexual encounters transpired in a rhetorical netherworld where her own preferences and passions were continually crushed, where in fact she aspired to vanquishing fully her own intangible sensual desires.

To summarize my comparison of libertines and whores then: Despite their many historical and social connections, libertines' and whores' distinct socioeconomic ideologies resulted in very different attitudes towards sex. Aristocratic rakes transferred a general sense of

entitlement to the bedroom; there was every reason to believe pleasure was not only natural and "sensible," but deserved. Obviously every single sexual encounter did not result in pure ecstasy, yet sensual release was a desirable outcome. Seeing themselves not only as unhypocritical, but as genetically predisposed to honesty and intelligence--as "truewits"--libertines were able wilfully and openly to accept their complex sexual desires. Though whores and courtesans shared the libertines' fascination with language and strove, like libertines, for cognitive mastery through use of their wit, their ideology of class offered no automatic privileges. Their sense of worth could be earned, but it was continually contaminated by an uncomfortable relation to feminine modesty. Language functioned for prostitutes as a way of masking her essential marginalization: it was a performance tool, a trick of the trade, connected to no reality but the socioeconomic one. Any sexual pleasure the whore experienced was mere accident. And the discourse by which she defined herself accounted for this pleasure not at all: rather it suggested that sexual enjoyment was a mark of intellectual deficiency, and was antithetical to the whore's ultimate success.

What of our promiscuous Ladies Sedley and Castlemaine? Given the importance of social position to rakes and whores, I surmise that these noblewomen identified more with their lusty Court companions, the libertines, than with social

climbing whores.¹⁹ As aristocrats, their status ideology (birth not worth) meant that the significance of feminine modesty was not accentuated in the same way as it was for less elite women. Furthermore, because they were able to spend more time in the company of male courtiers, Castlemaine, Sedley and other women like them, had better access than other women to libertine discourses of sexual entitlement. David Roberts explains it this way: "[Non-aristocratic] women acquire[d] leisure through exclusion from the men's world, while aristocratic women share[d] their leisure with men" (9). As noblewomen deeply enmeshed in Whitehall culture, the chances of Castlemaine and Sedley seeing themselves as "truly" witty were better too because "[o]pportunities for developing literacy at least to the same degree as men multiplied the more a woman moved in fashionable circles" (D.Roberts 23). Perhaps the best evidence of Castlemaine's and Sedley's identification with their libertine companions lies in their choice of partners. They may have had greed or status in mind when they initiated their royal affairs, but then so, probably, did Rochester and Sedley when they charmed their Heiresses. However, like other money-conscious rakes, they didn't stop

¹⁹ I imagine that the fact that during the Restoration a "steeply rising proportion of the daughters of ducal families remained unmarried" (D.Roberts 105) indicates that other aristocratic women also identified with their male libertine cohorts.

there. When the independently wealthy Lady Sedley closed the door on her life as a single seductress, and married her soldier, if anything it was a socioeconomic move up for him, not her. This was a decision which flew in the face of Creswel's advice in The Whores Rhetorick to enter into wedlock if and only if the match could benefit the former whore (61). And had Lady Castlemaine been hungry only for status, she would have done all she could to retain the King's affection--after all, any move away from the imperial sceptre would be a move down. But she seems to have enjoyed a rakish appetite for variety, for transgression, and for notoriety. Castlemaine slept with women, had "hectic love affairs with men who were much younger than herself" (Hebe 159), and even during the height of her reign at Court, became known for her fondness for sexual "slumming."²⁰

²⁰ For example, Andrew Marvell wrote a poem based on a rumour about Castlemaine getting so turned on by one of her running footmen that she invited him to share her bath:

Stripp'd to her skin, see how she stooping stands,
Nor scorns to rub him down with those fair hands.
(cited in Morrah 45)

And in "Mistress Knight's Advice to the Duchess of Cleveland in distress for a prick," Rochester delights in the same status infraction but treats Castlemaine's "stooping" even more crassly. In this poem, Castlemaine asks for the key to "some cellar in Sodom" where she will find "porters with black pots [sitting] round a fire" who will provide her with "a dozen of pricks, for a dozen of ale" (Rochester 54).

**Aphra Behn: auth-WHORE or WrITer
Sexual identity and authorship in The Rover**

"A very good text this, if well handled..."
--Hellena in The Rover (1.2 169)

Born in 1640, Aphra Johnson may have been the daughter of a barber.¹ It is likely that some twenty years later, she married a man named Behn, probably a merchant of Dutch descent who died of the plague in 1665. Though Mr Behn was said to have been rich, by 1666 the widowed Aphra was almost broke: "[her] entire means consisted of 40 pounds and a few rings and other items of jewellery" (Woodcock 29). A great deal of evidence suggests that she was then engaged as a Royal spy in Holland, but was called back to London a short while later only to be imprisoned for debt (Todd 70). With the failed stint as a secret agent behind her, no husband and no money, it is easy to imagine Aphra Behn, like Dorothea in The Whores Rhetorick, opting for a career as a whore. After all, prostitution was the trade most easily accessible to single women in her position, and seemingly the most promising.

But of course Behn did not choose whoredom. Instead-- and here the picture of the woman often heralded as the first professional female author becomes much less cloudy-- Behn poured her energy into writing. Her first play, a

¹ Many of the details of Aphra Behn's early life are under dispute--including the date of her birth. Most biographers agree on 1640, though recently Sarah Mendelson has argued that Behn must have been born in the late 1640s (Russell 37).

tragi-comedy called The Forced Marriage, opened in 1670. And by the time of her death 19 years later, the prolific Behn had entertained Londoners with 17 plays, 13 long prose works, and several collections of poetry and translations (Spender 53). At the height of her career, Behn was entrenched in Court culture, hobnobbing with the best known wits, including Rochester, Dryden, Otway and possibly Wycherley (Todd 70).

Exactly how she was first acquainted with this scene is not known. George Woodcock, author of Aphra Behn: The English Sappho, suspects that by 1663 Behn had already met John Dryden, and Thomas Killigrew the libertine playwright and patentee of the Theatre Royal, and that through her association with these two men she met the King (28).² "The only information of her first introduction to Court..." explains Woodcock, "is that she amused Charles II with her witty conversation..." (30). Just over a decade later, Behn acquired Court patronage (Kavenik 107). Because of her exceptional wit--with all that term implies--Behn was able to make the most of her aristocratic connections, gaining first a much-needed income as a playwright, and then acceptance into the most elite artistic clique of her day.

So Behn earned her living not lying down, but sitting up, quill in hand. Yet she did not escape the favourite

² In her introduction to a collection of Behn's plays, Jane Spencer offers two other accounts of Behn's introduction to the literary elite (vii).

slur of the Restoration: Behn too was accused of immodesty, and called a whore. In his poem to the "Sappho of the Age," inspired by a rumour that she had gonorrhoea, Wycherley relies on a common pun of the Restoration to compare Behn to a cheap--because overly used--prostitute. "Parts" could mean "high intellectual ability, cleverness, talent," or it could mean "genitals." Wycherley delights in playing with both connotations: "Now Men enjoy your Parts for Half a Crown,/ Which, for a Hundred Pound, they scarce had done,/ Before your Parts were, to the Public known" (cited in Gallagher WWTMW 72). In all likelihood, like her courtier contemporaries, Behn did have numerous sexual relationships--and a few were certainly notorious (Todd 70). But the rationale for Behn's indictment was not the same as for Lady Castlemaine's and Lady Sedley's: this was not a straightforward extension of the double standard. Behn's defamation stemmed from the fact that she wrote, and published her writing. The last lines of another satire addressed to Behn makes this point even more vividly: "For Punk and Poetess agree so Pat,/ You cannot be This and not be That" (cited in Behn TR 18). Angeline Goreau deciphers the "logic" of this analogy: because of the obsession with female virtue in the late seventeenth century, a sexual significance was ascribed "to any penetration, either from within or from without, of a woman's 'private circle'" (150). The way the writer, like the masked prostitute,

juggled concealment--the private act of writing--and exposure--productions and publications--paradoxically intensified her immodesty: the precarious balance was in itself highly seductive. And the necessarily sexual undertones of wit further muddled the identities of the woman writer and the prostitute. Todd sums up:

Verbal antics were confounded with the sexual and the pen became a female instrument of lubricity. Restoration prostitutes were known for their wit, a dangerous possession for a woman, always faintly suggesting erotic impropriety. The mask or the vizard, the sign of looseness and ambiguity, was also the sign of the writer who improperly hid part of herself. (33)

The icing on the cake was that just as prostitutes turned their own bodies into commodities, writers too exchanged their creativity--their "parts"--for money.³

The writer-whore label was by no means reserved for Behn alone. Dale Spender argues that "by the time of the Restoration... the distinction between the prostitute and the woman writer was so blurred as to be almost nonexistent" (14). And the author-whore analogy could be made with

³ In Mothers of the Novel, Dale Spender suggests that when the aristocratic literati mocked profit-seeking whores and writers, the underlying venom may have stemmed mostly from status/class intolerance: "it is possible that the opprobrium associated with both [prostitution and writing] is more closely connected to the selling and the money making than it is to any particular commodity they were trying to sell" (14).

respect to male writers of the Restoration too. Male writers also exposed themselves publicly, and (often) took money for their efforts. But the idea that men were in effect prostitutes was far more humorous than dangerous: looseness did not carry the same social stigma for men. More frequently male writers of the Restoration were--and continue to be--connected to the promiscuous, aristocratic identity, that of the libertine true-wit. As I have shown, the male literary types who belonged to the King's circle of courtiers such as Rochester, Wycherley, and Sedley were and are portrayed almost exclusively as libertines.

In the last chapter, I analyzed the contrasting sexual self-concepts of the prostitute and the libertine. Now I'm going to consider the relative value of these identities as models for female authorship in the Restoration. In particular, I'll focus on how Behn represented her writerly self in the play, The Rover (1677).⁴ Besides being her most frequently performed play, The Rover is an obvious choice for this investigation because in its postscript, Behn herself presents her author-persona in sexual terms. There had been talk of plagiarism, talk serious enough that The Rover's publisher had delayed publication of the play for fear of being fined (Kewes 108), and Behn wrote her

⁴ According to George Winchester Stone, The Rover was one of top ten most popular plays between 1660-1747, having been produced 93 times during that period (Styan 258). It is also one of the few of Behn's plays to have been revived in the twentieth century (Styan 252).

postscript for the published version of the play in direct response to this accusation. In it, she admits, without shame or guilt, having borrowed from Killigrew's earlier play, Thomaso, or, The Wanderer (1654). (This kind of appropriation was, after all, a standard practice for Restoration playwrights.) Behn cleverly defends her originality through a reference to Angellica Bianca, a prostitute character in both plays. Early on in The Rover, Angellica has a picture of herself put up in a public square in order to advertise her professional services. Behn invites readers to compare her with the working girl who shares her initials: "I might have appropriated all to myself, but I, vainly proud of my judgement," writes Behn, "hang out the sign of Angellica (the only stolen object) to give notice where a great part of the wit dwelt" (189).

What was Behn's point in framing herself like this? A character in a dramatic dialogue by Charles Gildon, one of Behn's contemporaries, snaps, "What a pox the women to do with the muses?" and then deigns to solve the quandary himself with a biting witticism. "I grant you the poets call the nine muses by the names of women, but why so... because in that sex they're much fitter for prostitution?" (cited in Gallagher WWTMW 73) Did Behn agree that as a woman, she was naturally inclined towards immodesty and that her self-promotion as a writer was interchangeable with prostitution? Janet Todd and Catherine Gallagher, two

contemporary feminist critics, believe so. Both see Behn's identification with the whore as a reasonable and well-thought-out decision. "Aphra Behn knew the implications of taking on the sign of the whore Angellica," writes Todd in the introduction to her book The Sign of Angellica, tacitly suggesting that Behn willingly accepted all those implications.(33) Gallagher frames Behn's identification with the prostitute in a more obviously positive light, "Conscious of her historical role, she introduced to the world of English letters the professional woman writer as a newfangled whore" (66). Like Nickie Roberts, Gallagher presents prostitution as the ultimate pro-sex choice for the emancipated Restoration woman.

I can't deny, of course, that Behn *did* compare herself to a whore. I believe, however, that given what I have discovered about the whore's identity, and given the various social positions Behn occupied, the prostitute serves only as an incomplete model of Behn as author. In this chapter I will argue, first of all, that Todd's and Gallagher's versions of Behn as author-whore replicate the violent self-division of The Whores Rhetorick; and I will use this analysis to outline Angellica's limitations as Behn's authorial self-portrait. Then I will contend that with Hellena, the money-conscious, desiring, sharp-witted noblewoman who is Angellica's counterpoint in the play, Behn treats herself to a more coherent--and sexier--alternative

for her writing identity. Historically, emphasis has been placed on the fact that Behn was a female writer, so she has been prime author-whore material. But it seems to me that in the Restoration world of letters, as in the sexual domain, being female was less restrictive than it is sometimes portrayed, particularly for Behn who, like Lady Castlemaine and Lady Sedley, had strong ties to the Court and, like them, revelled its ribaldry. I believe that Behn was in a perfect position to identify not just with prostitution but with libertinism as well--she could go either way.

Written more than three hundred years later, Gallagher's and Todd's analyses of the Restoration author/trading lady echo the same idea of the split self that underlies The Whores Rhetoric. Todd sees Behn's focus in the postscript to The Rover on the sign of Angellica as significant: Behn's concern as a writer, Todd claims, is "with the portrait, with the social construction of woman, the woman in business, in activity, in story, and in history, the female persona not the unknowable person" (1 my italics). Gallagher explores the prostitute in more depth. She draws parallels between the author and the whore through legal and social history, defining the affiliations between publication and prostitution against the role given to women in marriage. In seventeenth-century England, the married

woman was subject to her husband, both personally and legally, and any property she brought to the marriage became his (Bacon 430). As the oddball Restoration writer Margaret Cavendish remarked, "Daughters are but branches which by marriage are broken off from the root whence they sprang and grafted onto the stock of another family, so that daughters are to be accounted but as moveable goods or furnitures" (cited in Spender 41). Gallagher explains that a woman could keep her identity whole, her mind and body integrated, only by accepting fully her furniture status, by "giving" herself entirely to a husband. Marriage was thus at once an act of total and final self-possession and an act of total and final self-alienation (70). But publication, like prostitution, Gallagher insists, promised an escape from this catch-22. Like prostitution, publication entailed the piecemeal traffic of what should by rights belong to a man--not, in this case, her body, but the property of her mind. To extend Cavendish's daughters-are-branches metaphor, publication and prostitution turned a girl into her own horticulturalist: she snapped off her own boughs for sale and replenished them at will. Gallagher argues that in choosing to write, Behn also chose a form of self-ownership available in this perpetual self-sale:

Aphra Behn... create[s] a different ideal of identity, one complexly dependent on the necessity of multiple exchanges. She who is able to repeat

the action of self-alienation an unlimited number of times is she who is constantly there to regenerate, possess, and sell a series of provisional, constructed identities. (70)⁵

Both Gallagher and Todd set up an essential contradiction in this author-whore identity: Behn as writer is constructed both by her society, and by herself. In Todd's version, by pointing to the sign of Angellica, Behn indicates her preoccupation with "the social construction of woman, ...the female persona not the unknowable person" (1). In Gallagher's version, Behn "stages her lack of self-expression and consequently implies that her true identity is the sold self's seller" (69 my italics). Todd and Gallagher alike assume that for Behn identity is a mask, persona, nothing but construct. Yet they also intimate that an authentic, hidden inner-self, somehow removed from social influences, works behind the scenes to orchestrate repeated

⁵ Interestingly, in one way The Whores Rhetorick counters Gallagher's notion of the prostitute's partial self-possession. Dorothea's plunge into whoredom is figured in precisely the terms used to describe the bride's submission to the groom. First Dorothea hesitates,

The only obstacle that now remained, which retarded the full conquest, and made her for a few minutes suspend a *final and absolute surrender of her self*, was the consideration of her own ignorance in the affairs of the World. (my italics 17)

However, eventually, Dorothea dives in, releasing herself from any self-responsibility: "Good Night, Good Mother and remember I have given *my self up entirely to your care...*" (34 my italics). Creswel as bawd assumes the husband's role as possessor/caretaker of newly acquired "property."

acts of self-invention. Todd calls this mysterious maestra, "the unknowable person" (1); Gallagher calls her "an unseeable selfhood" (69).

When the audience first meets Angellica, her identity is fashioned according to the pattern that Todd and Gallagher ascribe to Behn--"artificial" constructed self/selves outside, "true" constructing-self inside--and she appears to have graduated with honours from Madam Creswel's whore school. Angellica's marketing scheme is very slick, and apparently effective. She can afford to charge the steep price of a thousand crowns for her services, and her position high up on a balcony figuratively represents the heights to which she has risen through her career. Angellica assures her servant, and the audience, that she's "resolved that nothing but gold shall charm [her]" (2.1 134-35). Then she "spread[s] [her] nets" to capture yet another rich client, singing and playing the lute from behind a curtain to pique the curiosity of aristocratic men loitering below, while her portrait arouses interest in her beauty (2.1 145-160). The concept of the split self is perfectly dramatized in this scene: Angellica exhibits her saleable image while literally hiding her "real" self. In this moment, the expert whore is both highly conscious of and in control of her own self-promotion, and her sense of confidence comes from what Heidi Hutner calls "the reversed double gaze" (107). Angellica

laughs inwardly at her own brilliance in milking her clients' sexist projections; she watches Don Pedro and Antonio as they in turn look at (the picture of) her... But this is the most smug Angellica ever appears in The Rover. Soon she is forced to pay the psychological price of perpetual self-division.

And, as it happens, the seeds of Angellica's ruin are actually embedded in her whore's rhetoric. Gallagher's and Todd's identity paradox underlies Creswel's depiction of the Restoration prostitute. Though she doesn't explicitly mention a hidden aspect of the self, in her own way Creswel exposes in The Whores Rhetoric an "unseeable selfhood" behind the prostitute's vizard. It turns out, however, that the whore's "unseeable selfhood" encompasses not only a master manipulator but also, strangely, a helpless and giddy lover. Throughout The Whores Rhetorick, Creswel insists that the successful whore should focus only on her image: she must work at satisfying the unique whims and fancies of each client, and suppress, if by fluke it awakens, her own desire.

The old bawd holds up the character of the mythic Amazon princess Thelestris as a role model whose self-possession and blatant indifference to men Dorothea should seek to emulate:

Thelestris came to Alexander as a Sovereign

Princess, not as a whining Lover, with a splendid

band of her own Subjects, not like an humble suppliant, commanding rather than intreating that great King, to stop in the career of his Victories, till he left something in her Womb; which if of the genuine Sex, might prove an Heiress to the Kingdom, and succeed in her Mothers Throne. It was plain there was not a glimpse of love in the case, or any thing like a fond passion; for we find the first instant this Princess found in her self the desired effect of that noble conjunction, she bad the Conqueror adieu... (155-156)

For Creswel, Thelestris represents powerful, autonomous womanhood. Yet she is aware that this is an ideal that the whore rarely achieves. For Creswel instinctively understands that the whore's self-control spawns, as a byproduct, a dangerous fascination with the forbidden. "I am against your reading Romances, where constancy in love is cryed up as a vertue" (151), she tells her pupil, warning "in the whole course of my years, I never knew any Whore escape a miserable and a beggarly end who was so weak as to entertain any spark of true love" (152).

Creswel knows what she's talking about. She herself has first-hand experience with what happens when the whore's defenses come down:

I was not then so wise as to contain myself within the bounds of a Rhetorick; my vain curiosity transported me into the wild and unpassible mazes of Philosophy to gratifie my own fantastical and giddy nature. I fell in love with a dissolute and faithless fellow, (Ah Daughter! this is the accurst bane of our Sex, *but those especially of this Vocation*)... (20-21 my italics)

It's not by chance that Creswel has an irresistible urge "to gratifie [her] own fantastical and giddy nature." Though her very livelihood depends on her "contain[ing] herself within the bounds of a Rhetorick," the grave danger of self-destruction is built right into the prostitute's identity. Because the whore is sheathed so tightly in her rhetorical role, inevitably she romanticizes and hungers for free, spontaneous, "authentic" relationships; it's as if as her outer shell hardens, her neglected insides turn to mush. From a chink in the whore's artful armour oozes the soppiest notion of romantic love.

Creswel laments, "A small sincere flame was my bane" (21). It turns out that Angellica also suffers the classic whore's weakness--"a small sincere flame" prompts her undoing, too. And in staging this undoing, Behn displays the disturbing flipside of perpetual self-sale. Angellica meets a charismatic, and poor, rake called Willmore. The hardnosed, sophisticated whore knows instantly it's true

love--she assures the audience in an aside, "by all that's good, 'tis real" (2.2 107)--and starts thinking in terms of her "heart" (2.2 120) and her "soul" (2.2 70), not her profits. The moment Angellica gets in touch with these feelings, her talent as a performer and as a self-promoter fades. "[T]hou hast a charm/ In every word that draws my heart away," she tells him. "And all the thousand trophies I designed/ Thou hast undone" (2.2 126-129). She trashes her original resolution to be enticed by gold alone, and tells Willmore she needs only his pledge to exchange "thy love for mine" (2.2 146) and she'll sleep with him.

In making love rather than turning a trick, Angellica crosses from a cutthroat, interest-driven, rhetorical reality into a painfully underdeveloped "authentic" one in which she possesses few survival skills. Before long she learns that Willmore is no more willing to reciprocate her tender feelings than Creswel's "dissolute and faithless fellow." His rejection leads eventually to a confusing epiphany:

Had I remained in innocent security,
I should have thought all men were born my slaves,
And worn my power like lightning in my eyes,
To have destroyed at pleasure when offended:
--But when Love held the mirror, the undeceiving glass
Reflected all the weakness of my soul, and made me know
My richest treasure being lost, my honour,

All the remaining spoil could not be worth
The conqueror's [Willmore's] care or value.
(5.1 269-277)

The worldly prostitute feels, ironically enough, that in love she has lost her innocence. After a taste of her own desire, Angellica comes to see her former ability continually to create herself anew for her clients as not much more than mere delusion--"fancied power" (5.1 283), as she calls it. At the same time she recognizes that in light of her society's major regard for feminine modesty and honour, her past promiscuity puts her in a very precarious position: her "richest treasure" has been "lost." She has psychically absorbed her status as damaged goods so profoundly that she refers to her current self as "the remaining spoil." To look into "Love's undeceiving glass" is to look through the lens of the dominant discourse; peering in, Angellica glimpses a used-up hooker, discarded and worthless. The modicum of professional pride she once possessed has been smashed. Still Angellica has no home but the bordello, and when she exits in defeat in the last act of the play she presumably returns to her former career.⁶

"The author-whore persona...", writes Gallagher, "makes of female authorship per se a dark comedy" (66). And there is comedy in Angellica's situation. In her last scene with

⁶ In Act 5 of Montague Summers' 1915 edition of The Rover, which Hutner cites, "Angellica is led back into her role as courtesan by Pedro" (108).

Willmore, Angellica pines for her earlier naive state: "I was a slave/ --Yet still had been content to've worn my chains:/ Worn 'em with vanity and joy for ever,/ Hadst thou not broke those vows that put them on/ 'Twas then I was undone" (5.1 243-247). Enraged, she points her pistol at Willmore. She wants him dead. Then, after a series of farcical interruptions, the dramatic spark of Angellica's anger fizzles out, and she lets Willmore off the hook with a tepid threat (5.1 336-37). Angellica is funny in a pathetic sort of way, and the audience laughs--though mostly at her, not with her. On the one hand, it seems plausible that Angellica is Behn's self-deprecating joke about her own powerlessness as a female writer whose "parts" were under constant public scrutiny. On the other hand, Behn obviously understands the pain of Angellica's situation as well. I'd say there's also more than a touch of tragedy in Angellica's fateful pursuit of the one thing that must unravel her entire sense of self.

Behn clearly knew that if she were to draw her creative strength only from the prostitute's source, she wouldn't get far: Angellica's predicament plainly illustrates that. Yes, as a female writer, Behn was necessarily flirting with sexual transgression. But, as I have shown, there was another model of promiscuity to which certain women of the Court had access. Before going back to The Rover to see how

Hellena serves as a more empowering image of Behn's author-persona, I'm going to take a look at some aspects of the life of "the English Sappho" which might have prompted her to think of herself not as a prostitute but as a libertine-wit.

Behn was a widow.

Gallagher suggests that prostitution was the only escape for women from the complete self-alienation and self-possession of marriage. However in doing so, she overlooks another construction of female selfhood available to certain women of the Restoration: widowhood. Restoration widows were more independent than married women: "Under English common law, the widow could own property, make contracts, and therefore engage in trade; as *femme sole*, the widow had a legal identity which was not merged with that of a man" (Bacon 435). And widows did not have to divide themselves as prostitutes did: both legally and personally, widows enjoyed self-possession (Bacon 436). After her husband's death in 1665--five years before the production of her first play--Behn became one of those rare Restoration woman legally entitled to being her own boss. She never married again. Though there were no financial privileges in it for Behn, widowhood did offer her a unique psychological advantage over both her married and prostituted sisters.⁷

⁷ Gallagher may have ignored the widow by reasoning that only homicidal women could actually choose this identity for themselves. Yet some critics have mused that Behn's whole

Behn had friends in high places, and she was a confirmed monarchist and Tory supporter.

Whoredom was associated with the ideology of emerging bourgeoisie: whores had to believe that status could be earned. Behn didn't buy it. She was inspired by, and eventually accepted into, the same aristocratic elite that let Wycherley in the back door. Todd ponders the significance of Behn's political affiliation:

Royalism is not necessarily allied to women's creative writing or to feminist awareness... But there does appear to be a connection between professional, nonsectarian publication and royalist views. This may simply emphasise the importance of access to print or it may have some other significance. Certainly the early Restoration was a period in which a few notorious women like the Duchess of Cleveland [Barbara Castlemaine] and Nell Gwyn could rise to open political and social eminence in a way closed to them under parliamentary rule. Such a situation might well have appealed to Behn... who associated kingly power with a time of greater female autonomy. (16)

marriage was just another of her fictions which she invented precisely for the status advantages the widow enjoyed. (Spencer vii-viii)

I surmise that along with the importance of having access to print, the "other significance" of Royalism to Behn was precisely this association of "kingly power with a time of greater female autonomy." Barbara Castlemaine serves as the perfect reminder of what certain noblewomen were entitled to: pleasure, power, and witty self-expression. Behn chose her political stance shrewdly.

In her earlier essay on female writers of the Restoration called "Embracing the Absolute," Gallagher implicitly agrees. Tracing "the paradoxical connection between the *roi absolu* and the *moi absolu*" (25), she contends that "Toryism and feminism converge because the ideology of absolute monarchy provides... a transition to an ideology of the absolute self" (25). However, Gallagher conveniently ignores the issue of Behn's politics in her author-whore argument. Even Gallagher would have to admit, Behn's monarchism mars the neat image of Behn as a joyful seller of "a series of provisional, constructed identities" that she sets up in "Who Was That Masked Woman?" (70).

Behn was a playwright.

In comparing her writing-persona only with the whore, Todd and Gallagher align Behn with a characteristically female identity. Yet Behn wrote at a time when the writing profession itself was masculinized. Margaret Ezell explains in Writing Women's Literary History that, in general, the literary world before 1700 was "one in which men and women

participated together and... in which women were represented as being 'competitive' with men" (38). "Restoration critics do discuss poetry in terms of gender," Ezell elaborates later, though "it is not felt necessary to devise separate criteria with which to evaluate their writing" (70). In other words, though female writers were censured for immodest self-exposure, no safe "feminine" literary tradition had yet been defined: basically for a woman to write anything professionally was to write like a man. Dryden, for instance, theorizes that "women are capable of competing successfully with male writers by writing in a 'masculine' manner" (cited in Ezell 72). Considering that during the Restoration theatre writing in general was seen as too risqué for women (Wiseman 24), and considering that comedy was the bawdiest of all dramatic genres, in deciding to author comedies, Behn had no choice but to see herself as "one of the boys." In the preface to her play The Lucky Chance (1687), Behn confirms this identification: "All I ask is the privilege for my masculine part, the poet in me...to tread in those successful paths my predecessors have so long thrived in..." (cited in Goreau 266). Here Behn situates her work within an overwhelmingly male literary tradition and she contends that her writing-identity, "the poet in [her]," is explicitly male.

Self-possessed; elitist; male-identified; and more than willing, as Dryden put it, to "write loosely"--together

these traits form a sketch that closely resembles one of the King's merry gang. A tribute to Behn, written by a contemporary or possibly by Behn herself, sharpens this picture of the woman who penned The Rover:

She had Wit, Honour, Good-humour, and Judgment...

She was a Woman of Sense, and by consequence a Lover of Pleasure, as indeed all both Men and Women are; but only some wou'd be thought to be above the Conditions of Humanity, and place their chief Pleasures in a proud and vain Hypocrisy...

She was, I'm satisfy'd a greater Honour to our Sex than all the Canting Tribe of Dissemblers, that die with the false Reputation of Saints. (cited in Todd 71-72)

In this portrait Behn, like Rochester, Sedley, and Wycherley, Castlemaine and Lady Sedley, is a witty "Lover of Pleasure" who shuns hypocrisy and dissembling--she is, in short, the very essence of a libertine-wit.

Though she doesn't mention it in the postscript, I believe that in The Rover Behn's writerly connection with the libertine surfaces in her creation of the character Hellena. Whereas Behn extracts the character of Angellica more-or-less whole from Thomaso, with Hellena she blends old and new material. Her name is borrowed from Killigrew's earlier play, but Thomaso's Hellena is a trading lady more decrepit than Madam Creswel--"an old, decayed, blind, out of

Fashion whore...that has neither teeth nor eyes" (cited in Hutner 105)--who longs to be made fifteen and beautiful again. Behn literally grants her wishes, making her Hellena young, attractive, witty and aristocratic. Behn's Hellena is "given some of the liberationist rhetoric Killigrew put into Angellica's mouth" (Todd 362), but she is primarily based on two characters from Thomaso: the virgin Serulina and the prostitute Paulina, who, like Behn's Hellena, both refuse convent-life though they are slotted to be sent there. Behn's Hellena also resembles Serulina in the way she dons a mask and actively pursues her rover/wanderer. However, as Hutner points out Serulina's "pursuit occurs late in Thomaso; Behn significantly highlights the heroine's self-assertiveness by making Hellena's refusal of the nunnery, masquerade, and pursuit of love the very first events in The Rover" (105-106). Behn makes an undeniable investment in Hellena's character. She gives her the heroine's role, and purposefully designs her to sparkle, to provoke, and to act--in every sense of the word--more than any of the other characters.

Unlike Angellica, Hellena is a victim neither of society nor of destiny; she takes charge of her own life. During her first appearance in The Rover, Hellena announces that she is usurping the authority of her brother Pedro (who stands in as patriarch for her absent father), and will decide for herself what is best for her. "We'll outwit

twenty brothers, if you'll be ruled by me, come..." she orders her sister, Florinda, "let's ramble" (1.1 173-176).

Hellena's invitation to "ramble" must have instantly reminded Restoration audiences of the less than demure lifestyle described in Rochester's poem, "A Ramble in St. James Park," and embodied by the poet himself.⁸ Indeed this young "wild cat," as Pedro calls her (1.1 144), shares many of the libertine's attitudes and behaviours: the unapologetic expression of desire, the fascination with both kinds of wit, the economic pragmatism. Hellena feels no shame in declaring her appetite for sex (1.2 182), nor in seeking out an object of desire: "I don't intend every he that likes me shall have me," she tells Florinda, "but he that I like" (3.1 37-38). And after deciding that Willmore is the "he" that she likes, Hellena proves herself remarkably adept at captivating him with her exceptional verbal dexterity. She teases and provokes Willmore throughout the play. But she does more than flirt fabulously with the "he" that she likes, she also cognitively "masters" him. Like Lady and Daisy Fidget and

⁸ Here are the last few lines of "A Ramble in St. James' Park":

Unto this all-sin-sheltering grove
Whores of the bulk and the alcove,
Great ladies, chambermaids and drudges,
The ragpicker and heiress trudges...
Footmen, fops do here arrive,
And here promiscuously they swive.
(cited in Goreau 167 -168)

Mistress Squeamish, the gullible sluts of The Country Wife, Angellica stupidly believes she might monopolize the attention of a consummate player. Hellena, on the other hand, appreciates her male counterpart's drives, and avoids earnest expressions of "true" love. When she insists that she requires fidelity from her rake, she does it with a wink. Hellena makes Willmore swear never to see Angellica again; yet she seems not in the least put off by his inconstancy and knows she is asking the impossible, "What a wicked creature I am," she laughs, "to damn a proper fellow" (3.1 256). It is through her wit in the larger sense, her capacity to understand Willmore better than he understands himself, that Hellena finally moves the Rover to rove right into her arms.

As a prostitute, Angellica's sense of self-worth is fully dependent on her trade. As we have seen, the heights to which Angellica has climbed actually place her in a dangerously unstable position because of the way her success necessarily undermines her feminine virtue. When unrequited love for Willmore destroys her ability to perform as a whore, Angellica experiences total alienation, for she is shut out from all the discourses which might empower her: the idea that birth-is-worth has never been useful to her, her "honour" is long gone, and now even her fragile class ideology--the possibility of working her way up--shatters. The unflappable and forthright Hellena, by contrast, can't

be defeated in this way. Not only is she an aristocrat but, like Lady Sedley in her prime, she is an unmarried heiress too. She may resemble "moveable goods" in the marriage marketplace but because of her economic value she has almost unlimited control over where she ends up. Accordingly, Hellena possesses an implacable sense of entitlement.

Probably the most important difference between Behn's author-whore and writer-wit identities reveals itself in the contrasting ways Angellica and Hellena relate their socioeconomic status to sexual power. Each of the women configures the relation between money and sex predictably. Early in the play, Angellica draws a sharp line between money and desire, insisting that "he that wishes but to buy gives me more pride, than he that gives my price can make my pleasure" (2.1 121-122). When she sleeps with her paying clients, Angellica's gain is purely economic, she does not enjoy the sex. Hellena's pursuit of Willmore, on the other hand, is based on both socioeconomic status and desire. Hellena is acutely aware of her economic situation, and accepts that she is a marketable object, as she tells her sister:

[W]hat dost thou see about me that is unfit for
love--have I not a world of youth? A humour gay?
A beauty passable? A vigour desirable? Well
shaped? Clean limbed? Sweet breathed? And sense
enough to know how all these ought to be employed

to the best of my advantage; yes I do and will,
therefore lay aside your hopes of my fortune by my
being a devote...(1.1 36-41)

Whereas Angellica correlates her desire for Willmore with the absence of construction, with her selling-self, her "soul," Hellena does not depend on such self-division. For Hellena, as for her libertine brothers, there is no contradiction in having both a sexual and an economic interest in Willmore: he's funny, he's sexy, and by marrying him she can keep the three hundred thousand crowns her uncle left her (5.1 502-504). Hutner categorizes Hellena's choice of Willmore as "self-destructive" (109): "While Hellena wins the Rover, believing she will achieve her freedom through him, he has chosen her at least in part for her money" (111). But I can't see Hellena as a dupe; she completely understands Willmore's multiple motivations--because in fact she shares them.

The scene in which Behn explores the potency and the unapologetic complexity of her writer-wit persona most fully is in Act 4 when Hellena, disguised as a young servant, delivers an invented message to Angellica and Willmore. By casting Hellena in the role of storyteller, Behn asks the audience to take a second look not only at Hellena's character, but also at the relationship between the writer and her text. Interestingly, just as Behn refers to her writing-persona as her "masculine part," Hellena takes on a

male disguise in order to narrate her tale. The servant/Hellena begins his/her story with a conventional author's apology, "I'm too young to tell my tale with art" (4.2 222), then goes on to regale her audience with a narrative in verse that is far from artless:

I am related to a lady, madam,
Young, rich and nobly born, but has the fate
To be in love with a young English gentleman.
Strangely she loves him, at first sight she loved him,
But did adore him when she heard him speak;
For he, she said, had charms in every word,
That failed not to surprise, to wound and conquer...
With this addition to his other beauties,
He won her unresisting tender heart.
He vowed, and sighed, and swore he loved her dearly;
And she believed the cunning flatterer,
And thought herself the happiest maid alive.
Today was the appointed time by both
To consummate their bliss,
The virgin, altar, and the priest were dressed,
And whilst she languished for th'expected bridegroom,
She heard he paid his broken vows to you. (4.2 230-258)

The serving-boy's romantic tale practically demands that the audience compare Hellena's seduction of Willmore with the behavior of her fictional "lady." While the story told by the servant/Hellena seems loosely based on Hellena's and

Willmore's courtship as it has unfolded in the play, "the lady" acts far more passively and gullibly than does Hellena. The audience knows perfectly well that Hellena "charms," "wounds" and "conquers" with her words even more effectively than Willmore. The conventional romance reminds the audience just how unconventionally butch Hellena's attitude has been. And in fact the disguise and storytelling in themselves belong to her aggressive seduction plot. At the same time, though the "lady" in the narrative does not finally get her man, her aspiration for marriage corresponds to the outcome Hellena is genuinely hoping for.⁹

Female-to-male crossdressing was a tradition the British had borrowed from Italian Renaissance comedy (Kavenik 181), and crossdressing scenes were very common in Restoration drama: one theatre historian "counted no fewer than 89 of the 375 new plays written and produced between 1660 and 1700 with breeches parts" (Styan 134). Usually, a woman's hips, legs and ankles remained well-hidden under heavy layers of flowing cloth; arguably, Restoration writers

⁹ Though Behn would not have described it in the terms used today, Hellena performs herself in much the same way as a Brechtian actor performs her character:

In performance the actor "alienates" rather than impersonates her character; she "quotes" or demonstrates the character's behavior rather than identifying with it. Brecht theorizes that if the performer remains outside the character's feelings, the audience may also, thereby remaining free to analyze and form opinions... (Diamond 84)

were crazy about creating roles in which actresses had to appear in breeches because the audience loved the unusual public sight of all those curves (Styan 93). However, in Hellena's crossdressing scene in The Rover, Behn does more than appeal to her audience's voyeuristic inclinations: she also reinforces the difference between her heroine and other, more familiar sex objects. Hellena's witty, layered performance stands in sharp contrast not only with the passive virgin of her tale but also with Angellica's divided identity. Like Angellica, Hellena consciously takes on a role; but unlike her prostitute rival, she does not have to hide any of her parts when she performs. In Hellena's drag act, her socioeconomic concerns, wit and sexual desire all intertwine inextricably; there is no way to extract her "true" feelings.

I believe that with this ambiguous storytelling figure, Behn also invites her audience to take another look at the female writer herself, to take note of her myriad desires, and of her determination to satisfy them all. As Frances Kavenik puts it:

In her use of the breeches part, [Behn] showed that women could share the libertine philosophy with men and experience its liberating effects, in much the same way as she was able to compete on relatively equal terms with the best male playwrights of her time. (191)

In the last scene of The Rover, Behn drives home her point about women's capacity for libertinism by defying theatrical convention. Harold Weber summarizes the usual course of events in a Restoration comedy with a breeches part:

Typically, the female page ends the charade by revealing her true identity, reaffirming her true sexual nature by giving herself in marriage. Though the heroine may enjoy the male disguise and revel in the freedom it provides, by the end of the play she happily trades in her male attire for a wedding dress... The breeches role... promises an eventual union of hero and heroine once their sexes are properly sorted out, but it titillates audiences with bisexual fantasies while withholding that union. (165)

Behn has Willmore agree to marry Hellena just before the end of The Rover, and so in that sense she meets audience expectations. Yet Behn also pushes the transgressive element of the breeches role in a number of ways. First of all, she has Willmore submit to Hellena when the couple finally confirm their commitment to marrying each other. Semantically at least, it is he who "gives himself" to his future bride. Secondly, Behn never "sorts out" Hellena's gender, but keeps her in male drag right up to the end: even during the curtain call, she looks very bit as gallant and

debonair as her captain Cavalier (5.1).¹⁰ Thirdly, the play ends before "Hellena the Inconstant," as she calls herself (5.1 470), actually marries Willmore: Behn refuses to stage the ceremony. Clearly, she didn't want to go there. Instead, the moment in which, according to Restoration matrimonial law, Hellena would once-and-for-all lose possession of her self gets deferred, permanently.¹¹

While Todd's portrayal of Behn is by no means limited to the sign of Angellica, Gallagher seems to have fallen in love with her image of "the professional woman writer as a newfangled whore" (66). Though I find it hard to resist the image of the androgynous storyteller that Behn leaves us with at the end of The Rover, I doubt there's any benefit to insisting that either the libertine Hellena or the fallen prostitute Angellica provides a complete picture of Behn as writer. In fact, I want to conclude this chapter by linking

¹⁰ Behn does not immerse Hellena fully in libertinism. Hellena plays all kinds of rakish games but she doesn't indulge in premarital "kindness:" she knows the socioeconomic value of feminine "honour" far too well for that. Oddly though, Hellena's unwillingness to become physically sexual before marriage does stem in part from a libertine philosophy; rakes "prefer to manipulate their society in order to fulfil their own desires rather than to reform it" (Weber 116). Hellena knows tackling the discourse of modesty head on and alone is a losing proposition; she has no ambition to be a martyr for the cause of female liberation, she just wants her own happiness.

¹¹ Apparently, ending before the protagonists marry was an exceptional feature, common to Behn's plays. As Montague Summers remarks, "in most Restoration comedies, the hero is bound up in wedlock by the end; not so in Aphra's" (24).

Behn's contrasting self-representations in two different ways.

One connection can be made by noticing the moment in which Behn chooses to identify with each. Though Behn clearly invests a great deal of her creative energy in her clever heroine, and aligns herself with Hellena while she is writing the play, her identification with Angellica in the postscript is explicit. If Behn connects herself to Angellica after The Rover has been performed and just prior to its publication, perhaps it's because she represents a fear Behn associates with this perpetual splitting off and selling of her "parts," the potential terror of permanently cleaving herself in two, or of exposing too much, too publicly. Throughout The Rover, Hellena changes her appearance more often and more dramatically than any of the other characters, even donning a vizard to play the whore in one scene: she is always performing herself--no part of her need be split off or sold. Hellena is thus perhaps a utopian representation of Behn's identity as author as she is engaged in the process of writing, when she is free to be as witty, as playful, and as transgressive of her gender as her imagination will permit.¹²

¹² Jessica Munns' article on "Aphra Behn and Sexual Space" offers a rather more abstract version of the same idea. In Munns' view, Behn did not flipflop between a fun- and pleasure-loving assertive "male" self-image, and a vulnerable, fragmented and objectified "female" one, rather she continually identified with both:

Behn clearly feels quite comfortable with a pen/quill

The development of Behn's professional career provides another angle from which to view Behn's double identification in The Rover. Prior to The Rover, Behn had written six plays in as many years. And the success or failure of these early plays, both aesthetic and financial, had rested primarily in her hands. Behn had desperately needed money: she was "forced to write for Bread and not ashamed to owne it..." (cited in Payne 111). However, as Deborah C. Payne explains in her essay on "Aphra Behn and Court Patronage," without an aristocratic sponsor, Behn had no guarantee that any of her dramatic endeavours would prove fiscally fruitful. Going it alone in theatre was a risky business:

Like a few other dramatists who fell outside the system, Behn managed to get a start in the theater without the intervention of a patron; however, fresh out of debtor's prison... Behn must have appreciated the precariousness of her position.

(Payne 110)

between her fingers and this is not because she writes as a woman seducing a man or as a woman pretending to be a man. Rather it is because she asserts a confident literary androgyny that crosses boundaries set by a patriarchal biology... Behn's assertions of a "double right" take her to a third position, to a place that does not exist, from which she can imagine parallel existences: woman as other and woman as the one, woman as object and herself as subject. (206)

By 1680, nearly a decade after her first play, The Forced Marriage had been produced, Behn's reputation was made: she secured Court patronage, and both The Rover and a 1679 play, The Feigned Courtesans, received command performances at Whitehall. After this point, Payne argues Behn chucked the idea that her writing was a kind of prostitution, she "lay aside the issue of her sex once and for all in her prefatory writings" (116), and she identified more completely with her male peers:

After all, the role of "playwright as whore" posits a representation in which the real self must remain unavailable and ultimately unknowable --a series of endlessly multiple exchanges. By contrast, the representation of a known entity, the male playwright, must have seemed an overwhelming, psychological relief...For Aphra Behn, patronage functioned not only as a means toward professional and aesthetic validation, but also as a means towards a represented self. (Payne 117-118)

I want to suggest that Behn's double identification in The Rover, written in 1677, reflects the earliest stages of her professional and psychic turning point. On the one hand, Behn still hungered for profit, for public approval, and experienced sharp pangs of panic at the thought of tumbling, Angellica-like, from the somewhat shaky heights

she had reached.¹³ On the other hand, Behn's feeling of acceptance by the aristocratic elite must have been growing, too. The Rover's rakehell object of lust, Willmore, was said to be the spitting image of Rochester who, along with the Earl of Arundel and the Duke of York, was soon to become a regular sponsor of Behn's writing (Goreau 213; Payne 114). Moreover, Nell Gwyn, who would in 1679 become Behn's second-ever patron, was known to have attended Behn's plays since at least 1676--and it's doubtful that London's best-loved actress and royal courtesan came to the theatre unaccompanied (Payne 113). As Behn began to earn the approval and admiration of the aristocratic establishment, I imagine she felt more and more at ease taking advantage of the sexual and psychic licence that came with her growing status as a "truewit." And I believe that in her writing, Behn channelled increasingly credible fantasies of total self-possession in the creation of Hellena, a sparkling "wild cat" of a noblewoman who plots to get everything she wants, and succeeds.

¹³ In The Feigned Courtesans, first performed two years after The Rover, Behn has her character Cornelia declare to her rakehell pursuer, "I've known a courtesan grown infamous, despised, decayed and ruined, in the possession of you witty men" (4.2 83-84). It's easy to imagine Behn making a subtle reference to her earlier play here, remembering not only Angellica's descent into an alienating abyss, but her own potential failure before an aristocratic audience.

CODA:
From the Court to the Coffeehouse:
Female libertinism and the bourgeois public sphere

Ask me not then, why jealous men debar
Our sex from books in peace, from arms in war;
It is because our parts will soon demand
Tribunals for our persons, and command.
--Anonymous 1669 (cited in Goreau 157)

So a handful of women affiliated with the Court of the restored King in London in the latter half of the seventeenth century took on a self-serving promiscuous identity. So what? As we have seen, most of their contemporaries wrote off these sexually assertive women as extravagant, attention-seeking whores. And today's critics and historians have done little to rectify the situation. Furthermore, though in the late seventeenth century there were probably enough noblewomen like Barbara Castlemaine, Catherine Sedley and Aphra Behn to form a merry gang of lady rakes, by the mid-eighteenth century aristocratic values in general had fallen out of fashion and Restoration-style hedonism was a thing of the past, especially where women were concerned. So, historically speaking, why should we care that for a short while a few privileged women behaved unusually boldly and bawdily?

In this concluding chapter, I will attempt to answer that question by suggesting that if female libertinism was short-lived in the extreme, its impact was not. In order to do so, I'm going to amble away from the excesses of Court and sneak through the spanking new doors of the coffee

house. First, I will consider this new institution as a site of some of the major social changes of the Restoration; and I will show how the growing influence of bourgeois values in large part explain the decline of female libertinism. Then I'll take a look at two pamphlets which wrestle with the sexual politics of the increasingly popular meeting place: the "Women's Petition Against Coffee" and the "Mens Answer to the Womens Petition." I'll concentrate especially on the way aggressive female sexuality serves as a focal point in the notions of gender presented in the pamphlets. Finally, borrowing from arguments made about the Restoration aristocratic sodomite, I will suggest that though the sexual ideology associated with the likes of Castlemaine, Sedley and Behn eventually fizzled out, the archetype of the lady rake may have played an important role in shaping those new bourgeois ideals of femininity and masculinity which continue to remain widely accepted today.

In a letter to a friend living in the country, Rochester complains of the claustrophobia of the London scene, "[Y]ou at Court think not at all, or, at least, as if you were shut up in a drum; you can think of nothing, but the noise that is made about you" (cited in Greene 143). It's not hard to see how a courtier might begin to feel suffocated within the tiny aristocratic clique. Court activities such as wining, dining and dashing off to the

theatre--vying for the King's attention and gossiping about each others' antics all the while--were interrupted only by occasional "detox" sessions at some country estate; as a result, noble socialites were kept in nearly constant contact with each other. And theirs was a tightknit group. Between members of the literary and sexual elite I've been looking at in this thesis, for instance, there seems never to have been more than two degrees of separation. Rochester provides an obvious point of reference. Charles Sedley, poet, libertine, and father of Catherine Sedley, was Rochester's bosom buddy. Barbara Castlemaine often encountered the notorious Earl through her lover, the King--though the rivals for Charles' attention enjoyed no easy rapport--and indirectly, Castlemaine brought Rochester in contact with another of her conquests, William Wycherley. Rochester acted as patron to Aphra Behn; and he pulled strings to have Crowne, rather than Dryden, commissioned to write the Court masque, Calisto.

The incestuous little Court clan was unquestionably the heartbeat of the hottest political and literary scene of the Restoration--and, outsiders like Wycherley and Behn well knew that in order to "make it," they had to get in on its witty, racy action. Yet while the libertine-wits were at the height of their power at Court, scandalizing London with abandon and impunity, a very different socioeconomic, political and cultural realm was taking root elsewhere.

Philosophically, this new realm had its origins in the democratic ideals which had fuelled the murder of Charles II's father, Charles I, and pumped up the political power of Parliament; there was no sovereign at the centre of this growing domain. Instead of obsessing over royal approval, the vanguard of this new domain united around a fresh addiction: coffee. It was not by sheer fluke that England's first café--owned by Jacob the Jew of Oxford--had opened during the Civil War in 1650. This new space obviously had lasting appeal: by the end of the seventeenth century, fifty years after the Oxford entrepreneur made his daring leap into café culture, there were over two thousand coffee houses in London alone (Stallybrass and White 95). This, despite the vast destruction of the Great Fire in 1666.

From its beginnings, the café provided an alternative to the elitism, and to the chaos, of the alehouse and the playhouse. An important element of coffee-house culture which distinguished it from older meeting places was its egalitarianism: many social sets interacted there, unsegregated. One pamphlet of the period explains the status-blindness of coffee-house etiquette: "Pre-eminence of place none here should mind,/ But take the next fit seat that he can find;/ Nor need any, if Finer persons come,/ Rise up to assigne to them his room" (cited in Stallybrass and White 96).

Another novel aspect of the place was its emphasis on self-control. Throughout the Restoration, the growing group of merchants, bankers, entrepreneurs, and manufacturers increasingly distanced themselves from the unruliness of the lower classes. One locale in which they had regularly encountered vulgarity was in the tavern. The prudish author of a "Dissertation on Drunkenness" doesn't hide his disgust at ale-room manners:

The vile obscene talk, noise, nonsense and ribaldry discourses together with the fumes of tobacco, belchings and other foul breakings of wind, that are generally found in an ale-room... are enough to make any rational creature... almost ashamed of his being... (cited in Stallybrass and White 94)

Rejecting the coarseness of "the rabble," coffee-house owners instead instituted protestant codes of conduct which included rules such as "no swearing, no profane scripture, no cards, dice or gaming, no wagers over five shillings, no drinking of health" (Stallybrass and White 96). Over bowlsful of the Turkish brew, café patrons congratulated themselves on their rational and refined demeanour, debated its intricacies and then published "moral weeklies" based on them to help others find the prudent path (Habermas 42).

Hand-in-hand with disapproval of the poor came the early capitalists' disdain of aristocratic decadence and

excess. As Todd sees it, directly following the restoration of Charles II, "[t]ension between the aristocratic and immoral court and the more middle-class and moralistic City of London quickly arose, each in a way in the shadow of the other" (15). Despite this tension, at first the nobility remained somewhat in denial regarding the cultural and political power of the rising middle-class. When the transparent socioeconomic aspirations of protobourgeoisie, the "Cits," are mocked in Restoration comedies of manners, they are depicted as silly rather than threatening. According to Todd's account, in the early Restoration the emerging bourgeois ideology of self-control, like the King's half-hearted attempts at disciplining his "children," only intensified the aristocrats' pleasure in being bad: "The exaggerated promiscuity of the court almost seems displayed for an audience;" Todd writes, "a puritanical frame surrounds the libertine Earl of Rochester..." (15).

Though courtiers did frequent coffee houses, the Court didn't immediately grasp the political significance of the diverse social group cohering within this more inclusive space. However, before too long Whitehall and Westminster caught on, worrying that these new public meeting places fostered chatter that was rather less innocent than they would have liked. In coffee-house conversations, early capitalists expressed a contempt not only of the sensual and

verbal self-indulgence of the Court, but of the old-order institutions themselves.

Already in the 1670s the government had found itself compelled to issue proclamations that confronted the dangers bred by the coffee-house discussions. The coffee houses were considered seedbeds of political unrest:

"Men have assumed to themselves a liberty...to censure and degrade the proceeding of the State, by speaking evil of things they understand not, and endeavouring to create and nourish an universal jealousy and dissatisfaction in the minds of all His Majestees good subjects." (cited in Habermas 59)

The pressure increased to such a degree that in 1675 Charles II issued a royal newsletter threatening to close coffee houses because of their traitorous discourse; then, even more terrified of the civil unrest that might ensue if he went ahead and tried to shut them down, the King repealed the threat only ten days later. According to Stallybrass and White, this incident provides proof of the solid sociopolitical power of the rising middle class: already by

the mid-1670s a public space could be protected from the interference of even the highest authority (98).¹

If the coffee house fostered chatter that was not politically innocent, nor was it idle. Even in its earliest days, the "wakeful and civil" effect of a good strong coffee on the minds of apprentices and clerks was valued as an "unexpected agency in the prolonged struggle of capitalism to discipline its work-force" (Stallybrass and White 97). Other go-getters clearly benefitted too. Some of England's most important cultural and financial institutions began in cafés. Post-theatre talks paved the way for professional literary criticism. The distribution of written materials, including letters, by way of coffee houses was instrumental in the development of the Post Office; and news-sheets and other early periodicals such as "The Tatler" and "The Spectator," which were also circulated primarily through coffee houses, were among the forerunners of today's daily newspapers. Boyle, Christopher Wren and Sprat who were

¹ While the bourgeoisie disdained the elitism and self-indulgence of the nobility, they did absorb certain elements of aristocratic culture--particularly ideas of education and intellectual development. Moreover, as Kathryn Shevelov points out, the ideology of the nobility did not simply stagnate in the background as the middle-class values took hold:

[T]here are difficulties in distinguishing characteristics and ideology of the middle-class from those of the aristocracy and particularly the gentry, since these were also undergoing significant rapid changes in this period.(8)

In order to keep my argument clear in this chapter, however, I will focus primarily on the *differences* between older aristocratic values and those of the new bourgeois public sphere.

instrumental in the formation of the Royal Society frequented two Oxford coffee houses (Stallybrass and White 95). Lloyd's of London, Sun Fire, and Phoenix Assurance--major insurance brokers--were all first established in cafés. And so was the English Stock Exchange--"having originally met at Jonathan's in Change Alley, it moved to a room in Sweetings Alley which subsequently became known as Stock Exchange coffee-house" (Stallybrass and White 99).

As the protobourgeoisie grew in number and in influence, common ideas of socioeconomic status adjusted accordingly.² At the same time, concepts of gender began to change, taking on a strong anti-aristocratic flavour. Increasingly masculinity and femininity were defined in relation to work. As Angeline Goreau puts it, the "division of masculine and feminine spheres of experience separated 'the world' from the 'domestic circle,' the public from the private arena" (150). Labour historians have pointed out that this split reflected very clearly in the daily lives of ordinary women:

In the Elizabethan and early Stuart eras, women were active as speculators in salt, estate managers, buyers of wardships, money lenders, shipping agents, ship owners, and contractors to the army and navy. After the Restoration, fewer

² See pages 68 and 69 in Chapter Two for an outline of these changes.

women seem to be involved in such capitalist enterprises... (cited in Weber 145)

The belief that men and women belonged in separate places was exacerbated by simultaneous changes in scientific perceptions of human biology. As Thomas Laqueur has shown, instead of seeing women as lesser men as they previously had done, late seventeenth-century scientists believed that the sexes were intrinsically different from one another, or opposite (cited in McKeon 301). The social changes compounded the scientific ones, and vice versa. Women's established position as biologically and mentally inferior players of a hierarchically gendered socioeconomic game gave way to a new position for women as players of a much more limited, essentially and exclusively female, game. A coffee-house publication of the early 1700s reveals just how quickly the new gender formulae caught on: "the soul of a man and that of a woman are made very unlike," the writer/expert proclaims assuredly, "according the employments for which they are designed..." (cited in Todd 35)--money-making and home-making. The possibility that a woman might believe she was capable of sexual and economic autonomy, or of cognitive mastery or wit, was seriously undermined by these new perceptions of gender.

Numerous literary historians have explored the consequences of this shift in gender ideology in art as well as life. In Women and Print Culture, for example, Kathryn

Shevelov examines "the multiple ways in which the periodicals [published between the late-seventeenth and mid-eighteenth centuries] addressed and figured their women readers, and in so doing constructed a normative definition of femininity" (15). This new "normative definition," Shevelov explains, "represented [women] as *naturally* possessing qualities that rendered them with considerable authority within the private context of the home" (10 my italics). In The Independent Woman in Restoration Comedy, Margaret Lamb investigates the eventual demise of the heroines of Restoration comedies who, like Hellena in The Rover, possess "beauty, quick wit and an agile mind, a libertine insistence upon sensual fulfilment and a cunning ability to manipulate others to serve her will" (25). "That the aggressive, strong-willed young woman should be the focus of a sophisticated comedy in the Restoration era," Lamb remarks, "and should both before and after that period receive such different treatment is in itself a commentary on the age of the Restoration" (21). Lamb observes that by the mid-eighteenth century, comedies discarded witty and anti-romantic heroines, and replaced them with weepy and sentimental ones. In her history of women's amatory fiction, Seductive Forms, Ros Ballaster makes a similar point with respect to female authorship:

The novel, identified at every stage as a "female form," was, in [the mid-eighteenth century],

refined by purging it of its disreputable association with female sexuality and the subversive power of female "wit"... Women writers could now only gain status in the newly respectable form of the novel by denying any association with the infamous Behn...(3)

In the post-Restoration world of letters, it seems, a good deal of energy went into sanitizing earlier versions of femininity, and linking new representations of womanhood primarily with household affairs.

Given this dawning image of woman as essentially maternal, private and domestic, and given the values of the growing (male) bourgeois public sphere--autonomy from the Court, self-discipline, a nose-to-the-grindstone approach to productivity and profit-making--it takes no great stretch of the imagination to understand why female libertinism eventually faded away, both in fiction, and in real life. Though it was the life of luxury and leisure at Court with its psychology of privilege which had bred libertinism in general, even within the nobility the female libertine was something of an anomaly. In relation to the ideology of the early capitalists, however, there were two strikes against women like Barbara Castlemaine and Catherine Sedley: not only were they--like their male compatriots--aristocratic to the core, but they were the antithesis of the docile and home-bound female archetype. And there were three strikes

against Behn who favoured Royalism and who actually wrote and made public literary accounts of her distinctly-*undomestic* female ideals.

One might predict, then, that in the caffeine-buzzing minds of Restoration workaholics, the idea that women could and should take charge of their own sexuality was so marginal and odd as to be nonexistent. Why would these busy bourgeois men waste even a fraction of one precious minute noticing that some twisted females spent a lot of time and energy making sure they got laid well and often? This impression is reinforced by the fact that unlike the alehouse and the playhouse, the ostensibly public space of the coffee house was almost exclusively a boys' club: for the movers and shakers of the coffee house, it was men, and men alone, who could make things happen. Furthermore, this new breed of men deemed sex a frivolous issue which had no business distracting them from their important work. Bawdiness was not welcome in the coffee house; its space was "*de-libidinized* in the interests of serious, productive and *rational* discourse" (Stallybrass and White 97 their *italics*).

"The Women's Petition Against Coffee Representing to Publick Consideration the Grand Inconveniencies accruing to their Sex from the Excessive Use of that Drying, Enfeebling Liquor" was published in 1674, less than 25 years after

Jacob the Jew had made his debut, when the bourgeois public sphere was still in the early stages of self-definition. It was soon followed by "The Mens Answer to the Womens Petition Vindicating Their own Performances, and the Vertues of that Liquor, from the Undeserved Aspersions lately cast upon them by their Scandalous Pamphlet."³ Though neither names an author, together these satirical pamphlets are easily read as a classic battle of the sexes: each presents its argument from an explicitly gendered point of view, and each fiercely defends its own concepts of femininity and masculinity. Moreover, these broadsides reveal in no uncertain terms that early coffee-house men *did* notice the decadent trend in Restoration female sexuality--so much so that they felt compelled to strike back.

"The Women's Petition Against Coffee" expresses no explicit bitterness over women's exclusion from the men's happening new hangout. Instead, the pamphlet, dedicated to "the Keepers of the Liberty of Venus" and written by "a well-willer," advocates on behalf of the domestic rights of "several Thousands of Buxome Good-Women" who are currently "languishing in Extremity of Want" (1). The "Grand Inconveniences" that the petitioner passionately "[represents] to Publick Consideration" stem one and all

³ Throughout this paper, I will transcribe words exactly as they are spelled on the pamphlets, hence "The Women's Petition..." and "The Mens Answer..." (no apostrophe). However, for obvious reasons, I will shorten the texts' titles.

from a single problem: men's neglect of women's sexual needs. Several thousands of women languish in "Extremity of Want" because their basic rights as wives have been ignored. "[W]hen privileg'd by Legal Ceremonies, [a Woman] approaches the Nuptial Bed, expecting a Man that with Sprightly Embraces, Answers the Vigour of her Flames" (3). But lately it seems men have been incapable of "Sprightly Embraces" and have left their partners desperately unsatisfied. Why do men regularly douse the women's "Flames"? The women's petitioner is certain of the cause: too much coffee. "[T]he Excessive use of that Newfangled, Abominable, Heathenish Liquor called COFFEE has so Eunucht our Husbands... that they are become as Impotent as Age" (2). If coffee-drinking men continue shortchanging their wives in bed, the petitioner threatens, they "run the hazard of being Cuckol'd by Dildo's" (5). Like Lady Sedley and Lady Castlemaine--and like the dildo-obsessed Rochester, who "tossed off lines conjuring [his] mistresses to be 'kind'... and insulting them if they refused" (Goreau 168)--the women of this petition assume the classic libertine pose, "systematically lusty... and jesting, above all anti-romantic" (Goreau 168). Their longing for sexual pleasure is entirely unmixed with sentiment; rather sex is an "Action" (3) and an "Execution" (3).

The author of "The Womens Petition" is just as in tune with the social significance of female desire as she is with

female desire itself. Like Behn and other women writers of the Restoration, the women's petitioner fully understands the figurative sexual transgression involved in public self-expression. Knowing that certain male critics will latch on to the whorish dishonour of having published this pamphlet, the writer provides women's defence in advance: "[Do not] tax us of Immodesty for this Declaration since 'tis a publick Grievance... Necessity (which easily supersedes all the Laws of Decency) justifies our Complaints" (3).

Cleverly, the author of "The Women's Petition" undermines the limiting conventions of feminine honour and silence by insisting that sexual longing ("Necessity") exerts an even greater power over women than does decorum. Nothing can prevent these "Buxome Good-women" from thinking and acting from the crotch. By insisting that pleasure alone motivates the petitioners' immodesty, the author of "The Womens Petition" imitates the argumentation of the libertine-wit once again.⁴

The rakish sexuality of "The Women's Petition Against Coffee" and its direct literal attack on male virility, together with its metaphorical sexual menace obviously put

⁴ Todd sees the same line of self-justification in Aphra Behn. Todd cites one of Behn's treatises on writing--"[W]hy I write [all the little secrets of my soul] I can give no account; 'tis but fooling my self, perhaps into an undoing"--and offers this interpretation, "Self-expression like sexual desire is immodest for women but may be importunate... It seems almost a love affair with writing" (71).

the fear into Restoration coffee-house patrons. The author of "The Mens Answer to the Womens Petition" writes with such neurotic ambivalence that one pictures a Restoration Woody Allen by turns fascinated and disgusted by the powerful image of female desire evoked by "The Women's Petition." Initially, the men's vindicator responds defensively to the women's accusation, implicitly agreeing that men's potency is in question: "Have we not condescended to all the Methods of Debauchery? Invented more postures than *Aretine* ever Dreamed of?" the pamphlet begins. The petitioner vindicates men's sexual performance, arguing that men are more virile than ever (1) and this is thanks, not to women's sexual prowess but to coffee, because it "Collects and settles the Spirits, makes the erection more Vigorous, the Ejaculation more full, [and] adds a spiritualescency to the Sperme" (4). Soon the men's petitioner changes his tune, however, and launches a counter-attack. Excessive lust, the men's defender insists, is an essentially female trait--"the Grave and the Womb [are] equally Insatiable" (2). And naturally the insatiability of "the Womb" wreaks havoc, from time to time, on a man's ability to perform:

[M]ost of your own Sex are so well skilled in managing a pipe; and if you find that of your Husbands to be naught... your own perpetual Pumping him (not drinking Coffee) is the occasion of the defect. (4)

It seems that whatever their conscious political alliances, the men of the coffee house also make use of elements of libertine ideology in order to suppress women's power: the contradiction in "The Mens Answer to the Womens Petition" in fact directly parallels an inconsistency in the male libertine discourse that evolved throughout the 1660s and 1670s. At first the libertines begged for their lovers' compliance. But once women started appropriating the wits' empowering sexual discourse and ignoring the stifling conventions of feminine modesty and virtue, the male libertines viciously ridiculed female sexuality. Goreau illustrates this point with a particularly graphic poem that Rochester wrote for a promiscuous mistress: "When your lewd cunt came spewing home/ Drenched with the seed of half the town,/ My dram of sperm was supped up after/ For the digestive surfeit water" (182). The tone and images with which Rochester represents his lover's sexual appetite are clearly intended to disgust his readers. Just as the male libertine used satire to recover his lost sense of power over his mistress, the men's defender seeks to destabilize women's firm grasp on this sex-power, by exaggerating women's libidinal excess.

One configuration of female promiscuity, however, was deemed acceptable by the coffee-house men. Interestingly, this special case is overlooked by the author of "The Women's Petition" who assumes that it is only men who

"trifle away their time, scald their Chops, and spend their Money, all for a little base, black, thick, nasty, bitter, stinking nauseous Puddle-water" (4).⁵ Not only were there widowed women who owned and ran coffee shops, there were certain female regulars too--and presumably they also sipped a dish or two of the "Puddle-water" now and then. The "Mens Answer" informs the female objectors of their oversight:

We wonder you should take such Exceptions, since so many of the little Houses, with the Turkish Woman (sic) stradling on their signs, are but Emblems of what is done within for your Conveniences, meer Nurseries to promote the petulant Trade...; There being scarce a Coffee-Hut but affords a Tawdry Woman, a wonton Daughter, or a Buxome Maide, to accomodate Customers. (3)

Perhaps taking a break from streetwalking, "Tawdry Women," "wonton Daughters" and "Buxome Maides"--working girls all--are permitted to stride past the sign of the Turkish Woman to drum up business in the coffee house.

Why was it that working girls were not banned from the "serious, productive and rational" space of the

⁵ This special case is also overlooked by Stallybrass and White, who claim, somewhat elusively, that the coffee house was "democratically accessible to all kinds of men---though not, significantly, to women" (95). Though the initial implication of this statement, at least in my view, is that the new social space categorically denied entrance to all women, another reading implies that the space was not democratically accessible to women.

protobourgeoisie? In significant ways, the early capitalists saw eye-to-eye with sex workers. For instance, when the men's petitioner calls prostitution "the petulant Trade," we are reminded of the similarity between the whores' socioeconomic ideology--and their work ethic--and that of the emerging middle class. And the coffee-house men's defender even uses the same kind of terminology as the author of The Whores Rhetorick, characterizing intercourse not as enjoyable but as a burdensome task, a "laborious Drudgery" (1). Perhaps female sex sellers were allowed into the coffee house, then, because they actually served an important function in its de-libidinization. As Orr puts it, through prostitution,

female sexuality can be restricted by being written as a capital which can be measured and disposed of in a controlled fashion: an inversion of proper femininity, perhaps, but one which comfortably confirms another cultural imperative, that of capital accumulation. (205)

A major condition of the whore's success was her ability to prioritize economics over all other needs. The presence of a few Dorotheas, Angellicas and Creswells in each coffee house might have helped bourgeois men reinforce their belief in a socioeconomic system which centred on money. With respect to the increasingly capitalist logic of the public sphere, the economic terms in which the sex trade operated

seemed far less disruptive than the unquantifiable power associated with their wives' insatiable libidos.

When the men's petitioner makes this point about the female presence in the coffee house, the use of the second-person pronoun momentarily merges the identity of all the protesting, pleasure-seeking women with that of the whore. "The Turkish [Women]," the men's petitioner writes, "are but Emblems of what is done within for your Conveniences, meer Nurseries to promote the petulant Trade" (3 my italics). Here the petitioner's ridicule of women calls on the Restoration double standard in a predictable way. Like the men who railed against the promiscuity of Castlemaine, Sedley and Behn, the men's defender opts for the dismissive label of choice, whore, and rashly dumps it on all the petitioning women.

Of course, the shaming of sexually assertive women was not unique to the Restoration: that the bawdy women of the coffee-house pamphlets were subject to vehement social reproach comes as no great surprise. But the tactics employed by the men's petition to malign lusty wives may have been unprecedented. Much of the misogyny of "The Mens Answer" takes on a new anti-aristocratic slant. The men's defender expresses disgust not just at the wives' sexual perversion but also at their general self-indulgence:

'Till Noon you lie a Bed hatching Concupiscence,
then having paid your Adorations, to the Ugly Idol

in the Glass, you descend to Dinner where you
gormondize enough at one Meal to Famish a Town
Besieg'd; after that, you are call'd out by a
Cozen, and hurried out in his Honours Coach (whose
jogging, serves as a Preparative to your Letchery)
away to the Play-house, where a Lascivious Dance,
a Bawdy Song, and the Petulant Gallants Tickling
of your hand, having made an Insurrection in your
Blood, you go to Allay it with an Evenings
Exercise at the Tavern, there you spend freely,
[and] yet [are] Rob'd of nothing we can miss...

(5)

In this passage, the men's defender relies on the staunchly middle-class assumption that sleeping in, attending painstakingly to one's appearance, eating well, socializing, and theatre-going are all imprudent acts, acts to be condemned. In this description, an obsession with sex underlies women's daily affairs. Yet the men's insults don't focus directly on this lust, but rather on their wives' lifestyle, which is neither as productive as theirs, nor as quietly domestic as a "proper" woman's should be.

Interestingly, the daily activities of a bourgeois wife as the petitioner describes them are much like those of a libertine courtier. Though the Restoration rake was almost always an aristocratic male figure, Todd notes that outside

of the elite sphere, aristocratic decadence became associated with noblewomen in particular:

Court ladies were symbols of the general fascinated anxiety about luxury, aristocratic values and hedonism... [T]heir exaggeratedly naughty fashions, with plunging décolletage... outrageously affronted the Puritans... [and signalled their refusal of] the role of woman as domestic exemplar and subordinate wife. (21)

In "The Mens Answer to the Womens petition," libertinism appears to have crossed not only gender boundaries but class boundaries as well. In attributing stereotypes of libertine behavior to their female counterparts, the bourgeois husbands of these pamphlets perhaps attempt to kill two birds with one stone, shaming and subduing not just their wives but the still culturally-dominant aristocratic elite as well. And in depicting their wives as hedonistic rakes, middle-class men may have felt better able to see themselves as all the more rational, self-controlled and, funnily enough, modest, by comparison.

In my opinion, this (con)fusion of femininity and aristocracy in the coffee-house pamphlets hints at the part played by the lady rake within the development of modern patriarchy. Near the end of "Historicizing Patriarchy," McKeon provides a useful precedent. McKeon examines early

middle-class critiques of aristocratic English culture, and remarks that at the beginning of the Restoration period male aristocrats already seemed, to nonaristocratic men, to share some of the standard markers of femininity--"not only a fine luxuriance of dress, but also a softness and whiteness of complexion" (311). By the mid-1700s however, McKeon notes, middle-class critiques of the aristocracy often linked noblemen explicitly with sodomy: "The degeneration of aristocratic genealogy... was reembodyed in the effeminate nonmale, the 'unreproductive' sodomite" (310). Popular tracts depicted a "race" of effeminate noblemen who "unable to please to Women, chuse rather to run into unnatural Vices one with another, than to attempt what they are but too sensible they cannot perform" (cited in McKeon 311). McKeon goes on to unearth the rationale for eliding the identity of the aristocratic male with that of the sodomite, showing how their conjunction played a key role in the development of bourgeois notions of gender, sexuality and class:

Sodomy and aristocracy may be said to have analogous positions in the respective emergent systems of sexuality and class. On the one hand, a new standard of gender difference was achieved in part through the separation out of the limiting negative case for masculinity. On the other hand, the establishment of a new standard of social description was achieved in part through the

critique of a corrupt and outmoded aristocracy.
What aristocracy and sodomy shared was an
increasingly anomalous status within their
respective systems; or rather, *what they shared
was the function of establishing the regularity of
those systems by the fact of their own anomaly.*

(312 my italics)

Couldn't female libertinism have served a parallel
function to sodomy in the history of patriarchy? It seems
to me that McKeon's discussion of the extraordinary story of
Beau Wilson corroborates this idea. According to late
seventeenth-century reports, Beau Wilson, the younger son of
a poor family, burst onto the London scene with all the
luxurious furnishings of the most decadent aristocrat. And
his mysterious rise from destitute anonymity to fame and
fortune was made popular by two different accounts published
in the early eighteenth century. In both versions, the
ingenuous Wilson, a rare male Nell Gwyn, rises from rags to
riches so rapidly because of an affair with a thoroughly
depraved courtier. The anti-aristocratic bias of both
accounts is apparent. The difference between the two
accounts lies not in the cause of Wilson's sudden and
mysterious social elevation, but in the identity of his
elite lover/exploiter.

In the later version, published in 1723, Wilson's
seducer is an aristocratic man who introduces the

defenceless commoner both to luxury and sodomy. This account includes supposedly authentic letters exchanged between Wilson and his aristocratic male corruptor, as well as an anonymously-written narrative disparaging the nobleman's degeneracy and his "unnatural love" (McKeon 310).

In the earlier version, written by Delarivier Manley and published in 1707, the narrator is an elderly gentlewoman who has been unjustly cast aside by Wilson's noble lover. As in the later account, "the unnamed courtier finds Wilson destitute; falls in love with him; and vows to raise his fortune to the level of his merit on the condition of utter secrecy" (McKeon 310). But in Manley's version, the lover/patron is a "well-situated 'She-Favorite' at Court" (cited in McKeon 310) who, much like Castlemaine, gets a huge kick from sexual "slumming." This high-powered lady treats Wilson well for a while, but when her bedmate entreats her to make their love public, the ungrateful noblewoman arranges for his murder.

McKeon includes Manley's 1707 version of Beau Wilson's story largely as a contrast to the 1723 version, commenting that portraying a woman as "elevated and corrupt seducer" is a "not-unprecedented gender reversal," and summarizing Manley's plot without reference to gender: "commoner virtue," he explains, "[is] seduced and destroyed by noble perfidy" (310). McKeon's primary interest is in the advent of the bourgeois attack on sodomy. For my purposes,

however, the 1707 gender identity of Beau Wilson's corrupt elite lover/murderer is significant. Manley's lady rake plays into the same bourgeois anxieties around gender and class as does the aristocratic sodomite in the later "Love-Letters Between a certain late Nobleman And the famous Mr. Wilson." While decades later the sodomite became the anti-aristocratic scapegoat of choice, both the coffee-house pamphlets and Manley's Beau Wilson story suggest that the lady rake was a similar, earlier, target for the emerging middle class. In fact, the critique launched against libertine women may in part explain why later on the aristocratic sodomite came to be feminized, and castigated in gendered terms. Perhaps the earlier attack on female libertinism apprised the protobourgeoisie of the intense psychological power of shame tactics which emphasize gender transgression.

It seems plausible that the process by which libertine women were condemned by--and, paradoxically, reinscribed into--middle-class ideology went something like this:

Throughout the Restoration, self-possessed, promiscuous femininity was made fashionable by the likes of Barbara Castlemaine, Catherine Sedley and Aphra Behn; and as the coffee-house pamphlets reveal, this image of femininity eventually spread beyond the confines of aristocratic discourse. The female libertine was doubly marginalized from the growing bourgeois public sphere: she was

essentially aristocratic, and dangerously androgynous as well, since her predatory sexual style was generally associated with men. As the coffee-swilling protobourgeoisie grew in number and strength, they found that by deriding the hedonistic female figure, they were able at the same time to distance themselves from the quick-quipping, sex-crazed aristocratic male archetype--the Rochesters, Wycherleys, Willmores and Horners who had dominated the Restoration stage--and to propel themselves towards uncharted territory where a prudent and productive version of masculinity and a docile and domestic version of femininity might both take root.

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