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# Class in seventeenth-century British drama by women

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**CLASS IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH DRAMA BY WOMEN**

**BY**

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**B.A. Pepperdine University, 1991**  
**M.A. University of New Hampshire, 1993**

**DISSERTATION**

**Submitted to the University of New Hampshire  
in Partial Fulfillment of  
the Requirements for the Degree of**

**Doctor of Philosophy**

**in**

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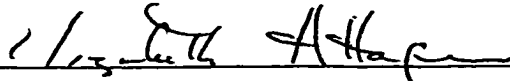
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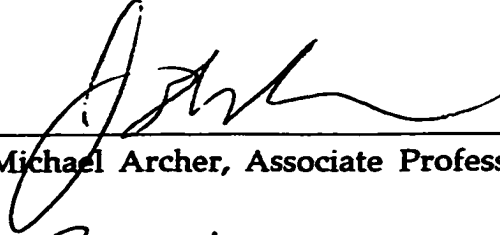
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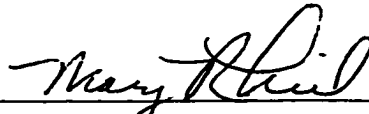
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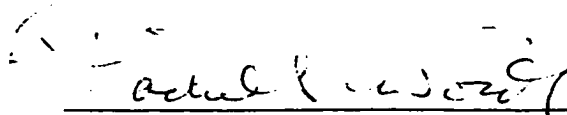
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*for*  
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## ABSTRACT

### CLASS IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH DRAMA BY WOMEN

by

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University of New Hampshire, May, 1999

This dissertation argues that seventeenth-century drama by women should be analyzed as a public discursive practice rather than as privatized "closet drama." This study focuses on class in order to delineate the texts' participation in public modes of representation and offers post-marxist readings as an alternative to the gynocritical/biographical model that dominates criticism on literature by women of the early modern period.

Chapter one of this dissertation problematizes separate spheres ideology, lest texts by women become separated from the economic sites that inform them. I consider the ideological importance of generic conventions, arguing that conventions of tragedy and comedy are often naturalized into signifiers of female characters' resistance to patriarchal socio-economic conscription. I link the ideas of homology and symbolic capital, both of which serve as a means of articulating the function of class in a study of women's texts. Part one of the dissertation, "Class Difference," considers two dramatic texts by aristocratic women: Mary Wroth's *Loves Victory* in chapter two and Margaret Cavendish's *The Lady Contemplation* in chapter three. Both texts strategically pit against each other two characters at opposite ends of the social spectrum. This mode of creating privilege—excluding a lower-class other—in turn constitutes a classed position for the author-functions of the texts. Part two, "Class Consciousness," considers the flip-side of the notion of difference by focusing on which classed concerns might produce certain representational

choices. Chapter four, which treats Elizabeth Cary's *Tragedie of Mariam*, considers the material bases of the text's ideological investment in its title character's status as symbolic capital by stressing the discursive saliency in the text of the connections among chastity, class, speech, and publicity. Chapter five extends this mode of reading for class by analyzing four restoration comedies--Frances Boothby's *Marcellia*, and Aphra Behn's *The Rover, Parts I and II* and *The Feign'd Curtizans*,--each of which notes the role of money in determining a gendered class identity. The availability of both women and money reified as the same circulating object guarantees the (inferior) economic place of the woman within a male economy.

## INTRODUCTION: WOMEN WRITERS AND CLASS

**"If ideology involves making what is socially constructed seem obvious or natural,  
then autonomy is a notion overdue for a demystifying wash."**

**—Margaret Ferguson**

Ten years ago, in an article for a special issue of *English Literary Renaissance* treating women in the Renaissance, Carol Thomas Neely called for greater visibility for women in Renaissance studies, claiming that in Shakespearean criticism especially, women were a "disappearing act."<sup>1</sup> She complains that women are marginalized—silenced or dematerialized—and when they are a focus, they exist only as an absent other (10-11). While the "new theoretical discourses" ("cult-historicism"—her term for an amalgam of new historicism and cultural materialism) should be consonant with feminism, Neely finds that instead,

their effect—not necessarily a deliberate or inevitable one—has been to oppress women, repress sexuality, and subordinate gender issues. All of the topoi of the new approaches: the historicity and intertextuality of texts; the constriction of history to power, politics, and ideology; the denial of unity, autonomy, and identity in authors, subjects, texts; the displacement from women to woman to sexual difference to textuality; the view of man/woman as just one more in an outmoded, interchangeable parade of binary oppositions, have the effect of putting woman in her customary place, of re-producing patriarchy—the same old master plot. (7)

Her suggested antidote to this problem of ideological reproduction is to "over-read" early British literary texts rather than under-read, deconstruct, or re-read them. "Feminist critique," she insists, building on Nancy Miller,<sup>2</sup> "needs to over-read, to read to excess, the possibility of human (especially

female) gendered subjectivity, identity, and agency, the possibility of women's resistance or even subversion. A feminist critique should be able to over-read text with history, and expand history into histories which must include the history of women" (15). Neely's call then, for "reengendered" (18) literary critique includes critical attention to gender that does not simply reproduce a patriarchal vision of women, but instead finds instances of women's subversion and resistance to their prescribed cultural roles.

But a focus on resistance and subversion, agency and autonomy threatens to unwrite women's complex relationship to cultural laws, including the way that some women writers, for example, were able to utilize difference among themselves to complicate a notion of gender solidarity, or conversely, of individual action. A recent review article by Margaret Ferguson challenges the way in which "subversion-resistance-autonomy" is a useful tool. "Because that term ['autonomy'] wasn't even used to describe an individual's 'freedom' until the early nineteenth century," Ferguson writes that "feminist scholars of the early modern period need to put more critical pressure on this concept than most of us (and I include myself here) have done to date."<sup>3</sup> While intrinsically indebted to Neely's work and the past and ongoing work of feminists in the field, my dissertation takes seriously Ferguson's challenge to complicate our current ideas about the position of women writers of the seventeenth century. This study accomplishes a revision of the place of women by positing seventeenth-century British drama by women as a public discursive practice contingent on class difference and class consciousness.

Serious and far-reaching work on gender has anticipated and heeded calls like Neely's for feminist investigation into the time period; in fact, my list here can only be an abbreviated one. Linda Woodbridge's *Women and*

*the English Renaissance: Literature and the Nature of Womankind, 1540-1620* (1984) culls literary texts primarily by men for their commentary on the nature of women. Catherine Belsey's *The Subject of Tragedy: Identity and Difference in Renaissance Drama* (1985) investigates court materials and focuses on issues of marriage and family, which direct her work on the domestic in tragedies. In the important 1986 collection of criticism *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, contributors re-read canonical texts as well as texts by women for their commentary on gender. The editors, Margaret W. Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy J. Vickers, note the collection's participation in the early work of recovering women's literary history: "a ... significant boundary crossed in this volume is that between scholars whose work is explicitly motivated by feminist concerns and those whose work is not or is only beginning to respond, sometimes critically, to questions posed by the new scholarship on women."<sup>4</sup> Another important volume of criticism that re-reads early canonical texts is *Ambiguous Realities: Women in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (1987), edited by Carole Levin and Jeanie Watson. Karen Newman's 1991 *Fashioning Femininity and English Renaissance Drama* considers the political construction of gender, as does *The Matter of Difference: Materialist Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare*, edited by Valerie Wayne, which appeared in the same year. Stage cross-dressing has served as a place to explore the constructedness of gender vis-a-vis costuming for critics such as Marjorie Garber (*Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety*, 1992), Jean E. Howard (*The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England*, 1994), Laura Levine (*Men in Women's Clothing: Anti-theatricality and Effeminization, 1579-1642*, 1994), and Stephen Orgel (*Impersonations: The Performance of Gender in Shakespeare's England*,

1996), all of whom work in very compelling ways on questions and issues raised by the study of gender and sexuality. Others focus on the specifics of sexuality—Jonathan Goldberg, Jeffrey Masten, Bruce R. Smith, and Valerie Traub's work on homoeroticism, and the collection *Erotic Politics: Desire on the Renaissance Stage* (1992), edited by Susan Zimmerman, for example.

These studies establish versions of gender criticism and the issues discovered by paying closer attention to women's history: sexuality, family, politics, and gender difference. But Neely also calls for greater detail and investigation into works written by women, and for the most part, the studies above do not attempt to read or account for literature by women during the time period. It has only been since the 1980s that texts by early British women have been "re-discovered" and reprinted in earnest.<sup>5</sup> Anthologies such as Mary R. Mahl and Helene Koon's *The Female Spectator: English Women Writers Before 1800* (1977), Betty Travitsky's *Paradise of Women: Writings by Englishwomen of the Renaissance* (1981), Moira Ferguson's *First Feminists: British Women Writers, 1578-1799* (1985), Germaine Greer's *Kissing the Rod: An Anthology of Seventeenth-Century Women's Verse* (1988), and Charlotte F. Otten's *English Women's Voices, 1540-1700* (1992) as well as Katherine Usher Henderson and Barbara F. McManus' compilation of pamphlet literature on the gender war, *Half-Humankind: Contexts and Texts of the Controversy about Women in England, 1540-1640* (1985) and the collection of writings, *Her Own Life: Autobiographical Writings by Seventeenth-Century Englishwomen* (1989), edited by Elspeth Graham, Hilary Hinds, Elaine Hobby, and Helen Wilcox, are representative of the collections of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century texts by women important to the project of recovering early British women's history. This growing interest is also indicated by on-going projects such as the collection of volumes printed in the series Women

Writers in English, 1350-1850 (Susanne Woods and Elizabeth H. Hageman, general editors), *The Early Modern Englishwoman: A Facsimile Library of Essential Works, 1500-1640* (Betty S. Travitsky and Patrick Cullen, general editors), as well as *Renaissance Women Online*, a database of some 100 sixteenth- and seventeenth-century texts currently being compiled by the Women Writers Project at Brown University.

These anthologies and collections represent the first—and necessary—stage of work on women’s literature, and my list is by no means exhaustive. Early volumes of criticism, rather than focusing on specific writers, or works, reflect the breadth of genres in which women participated. Elaine V. Beilin’s *Redeeming Eve: Women Writers of the English Renaissance* (1987) and Elaine Hobby’s *Virtue of Necessity: English Women’s Writing, 1649-88* (1988), two seminal early books on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century British literature by women, are less invested in theorizing or deeply analyzing works than they are in showing the extent to which writers like Margaret Cavendish and Mary Herbert participated in and shaped literary traditions, even traditionally non-literary genres such as letters and diaries. Some criticism incorporates literature by women into academic practices and discourses; the subtitle of Anne M. Haselkorn and Betty S. Travitsky’s 1990 *Renaissance Englishwoman in Print* announces the book’s project: *Counterbalancing the Canon*. Later collections of criticism, such as *Women, Texts and Histories, 1575-1760*, edited by Clare Brant and Diane Purkiss, and the similarly titled *Women, Writing, History, 1640-1740*, edited by Isobel Grundy and Susan Wiseman, as well as Tina Krontiris’ *Oppositional Voices: Women as Writers and Translators of Literature in the English Renaissance*, all of which appeared in 1992, explore the conditions of writing for early British women authors. In the following year, Margaret J. M. Ezell’s *Writing*

*Women's Literary History* compiled a genealogy tracing how women's writing has been excised from the literary canon. A potentially ameliorating model appears as the volume from the 1994 Dearborn conference (*Representing Women in Renaissance England*, 1997).<sup>6</sup> Of the fifteen collected essays, eleven explicitly focus on women writers as sources for the assertions of the essayists. This dependence on the words of women writers is perhaps an indication of a new direction in criticism. The editors indeed make this assessment in their introduction: they see their collection as wide-ranging—"a contribution both to literary studies of the English Renaissance and to early modern gender studies"<sup>7</sup>—rather than only a contribution to our notions of women writers.

While criticism on women's literature has been proliferating, as have editions of the literature itself, there is still a dearth of criticism on dramatic literature by women in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Part of the reason for this relative silence is that contemporary editions of the plays have appeared only in the last four years, with the exception of the Malone Society's 1914 edition of Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedie of Mariam*. Ferguson's *First Feminists* excerpted parts of Margaret Cavendish's *Convent of Pleasure*, but the play wasn't reprinted in its entirety until Jennifer Rowsell's 1995 edition. S.P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies' collection *Renaissance Drama by Women* (1996) has made an invaluable contribution, containing as it does editions of Wroth's *Love's Victory*, Cary's *Tragedy of Mariam*, Herbert's *Antonie*, and others. There are currently several editions available of Elizabeth Cary's *Tragedie of Mariam*: in addition to that in the Cerasano and Wynne-Davies collection, there are editions prepared by Barry Weller and Margaret Ferguson (1994), Diane Purkiss (1994), Stephanie J. Wright (1996), and Nancy A. Gutierrez (1997), as well as a 1992 re-issue of the Malone



Society's 1914 reprint, and a facsimile edition in Ferguson and Cullen's *Early Modern Englishwoman*, (1996).<sup>8</sup> There are currently two collections in preparation of Margaret Cavendish's plays (neither of them a complete edition of her 27 plays) by Anne Shaver and Paul Salzman.<sup>9</sup> The complete works of Katherine Philips, including her two dramatic translations (both of which were performed in the 1660s), are in preparation by Elizabeth H. Hageman and Andrea Sununu. There is also a new edition of Aphra Behn's complete works, edited by Janet Todd (1992-1996), with three of the seven volumes dedicated to her plays. While this rising interest is important and encouraging, there are still many texts that have never been reprinted, as is the case with a play discussed in the final chapter of the present study, Frances Boothby's *Marcellia, or the Treacherous Friend* (performed 1669, printed 1670), a play often noted as the first original play by a woman performed on the British public stage.

The newness of the editions is perhaps one factor in the lack of published criticism on these dramatic texts; of the texts mentioned above, only Aphra Behn's plays have a history of scholarship more than 20 years old. While Cavendish's plays have relatively few essays published on them, *The Tragedie of Mariam* has enjoyed many recent articles; and yet the criticism written on it is largely biographical: critics tend to read the play alongside the biography of Cary by one of her daughters, *The Lady Falkland, Her Life*, as unproblematically complementary texts. The same is largely though not exclusively true of the critical reception of Lady Mary Wroth's *Loves Victory*, which is often treated solely as a roman à clef. Such criticism provides important commentary on women's communities and the representations of gender; however, it also limits interpretive possibilities by establishing an incitement to account for the writer as woman rather than the woman as

writer.<sup>10</sup>

In fact, biographical criticism, as distinct from biography or even social biography, remains the dominant lens for considering literature written by women in this time period. Commenting specifically on scholarship of *Tragedie of Mariam*, Dympna Callaghan notes the biographical trend and explains the problems that arise from it:

the overwhelmingly biographical emphasis of the few full critical essays we have [of *Tragedie of Mariam* ] is partly a consequence of the fact that current essays constitute the necessary work of feminist archeology; they are, therefore, concerned with the relation between the subject position of the woman writer and the literary text. These legitimate concerns, however, frequently degenerate into an apparently irresistible compulsion to explicate the play in terms of the female playwright, a tendency to displace the critical focus from the text onto the elusive and perhaps inscrutable woman who lurks seductively behind it.<sup>11</sup>

Biographical criticism often enacts essentialism by building on a transcendental notion of the category of Woman at the expense of historical, cultural, and material difference. Replacing the artifactual text with the “inscrutable” woman writer poses a problem in that it divorces the text from the material prerequisites of its conception and production. Joan Wallach Scott reminds us that “this approach simultaneously establishes women as historical subjects operating in time and makes the idea of ‘women’ singular and timeless: those women in the past (or in other cultures) whose actions set precedents for our own are taken in some fundamental way to be just like us.”<sup>12</sup> She asserts that

the history of feminism has thus been the history of the project of reducing diversities (of class, race, sexuality, ethnicity, politics, religion, and socio-economic status) among females to a common identity of women .... To the extent that feminist history serves the political ends of feminism, it participates in producing this essentialized common identity of women (4).

Clare A. Lees pinpoints this de-historicized, essentialized gender identity within feminist literary scholarship. Referring to medieval feminist criticism, and echoing Margaret Ferguson's concerns for sixteenth- and seventeenth-century studies, Lees states the problem with some of its concerns: "Much feminist medieval scholarship rightly concentrates on examining the representation of women in society and culture and on recovering their history and agency--priorities that occasionally obscure how women are implicated in the classes or ranks of medieval social hierarchies."<sup>13</sup> Callaghan also critiques a focus on women's "history and agency" because it has served as a means of setting the author outside material conditions. She indicts much of the criticism done on early British women's literature because instead of finding new ways to read, it relies again and again, without reaching new conclusions, on problematic reading strategies that use sites of current political economy (gender solidarity in particular) without providing historicized answers. She writes here specifically about scholarship on *The Tragedie of Mariam*, but it is an argument that can be applied to other textual criticism as well. She states,

by positing *Mariam* as frustrated self-expression, the critic entirely evacuates the specificity of the text and domesticates (by dismissing it) the play's radical otherness. Crucially, if unwittingly, then, the tendency to elide female author and text places "race" outside the sphere of feminist concern. The gynocritical focus on reading Cary as a woman--the separation of gender from other systems of difference--tends to situate her curiously outside the material conditions in which she wrote and in relation to which she herself was placed as other. (167)

Callaghan uses the term "domesticates" strategically, since the type of criticism she outlines often *privatizes* literature by women, reducing its circulation to the fantasy of the author's personal identity and its subsequent privileging of gender solidarity and ignoring "radical otherness" of any kind.

Just as Callaghan uses racial difference as an antidote to biographical criticism on literary texts, in this project, I use class difference and class consciousness as a way of de-privatizing that literature. I recognize that this move uses the form and conclusion of Callaghan's argument while excising her particular focus on race, and I am wary of writing over her rightly adamant assertion that race is a category all-too-often excluded from early British literary studies (even more so than class). But it is because of current critical concern for the extraordinariness and autonomy of the female writer that categories such as race and class are excluded. Therefore, projects that recover race and class in texts are mutually invested.<sup>14</sup> I am interested in keeping my eye on class in the same way that Kim F. Hall and Ania Loomba, as well as Callaghan, keep their eye on race—not to the exclusion of other sites of cultural identity, but with a view toward understanding the matrix of relationships of these modes of identity formation while focusing on only one of them.<sup>15</sup> I argue that the dramatic texts by women I consider in this dissertation are discursive practices that constitute class difference and class consciousness as social formations.<sup>16</sup> Rather than construct women writers as extraordinary, subversive individuals whose writing and publishing sets them apart from other women and other writers, I will analyze the texts they produced as artifacts enmeshed in social codes and material constraints.

To illustrate that my study is an alternative to biographically-inflected criticism, I will self-consciously and purposefully not account for the life of the writer in this dissertation. I will refer to texts rather than authors as agents; in fact, all but cursory references to authors will be excluded. However, because the condition of being an author is a product of the texts I consider, I will use Michel Foucault's notion of the author-function in order to talk about the conditions of creating a textual apparatus by which authority

is put in place, while at the same time signaling a difference from the biographical author. Foucault has suggested that the name of the author is used to function as the stand in for the person who produced a text, when actually,

The author's name, unlike other proper names, does not pass from the interior of a discourse to the real and exterior individual who produced it; instead, the name seems always to be present, marking off the edges of the text, revealing, or at least characterizing, its mode of being. The author's name manifests the appearance of a certain discursive set and indicates the status of this discourse within a society and a culture.<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, when I say "the author" or write about authority, I don't mean the writer as woman (the "exterior individual"), but rather the author function whose effects can be traced through the text. This may in fact be a fine distinction, but it is an important one: rather than psychologizing the writer, determining her motive, her feelings, her conclusions on matters, and the connections of those things to her biography, I consider the specific notion of authority that generates a textualized author function whose existence is constituted by the text. This distinction allows a means of historicizing the notion of authority in the texts, rather than positing the name of the author as a referent only for (the) Woman.

A reliance on the author-function will allow me to stress that what I'm writing about here is a discursive system of authority and the textual formation of class, not a social history of Woman's class position in the seventeenth century. I am not making claims that there is a one-to-one correspondence between fictional lives in texts and the way early British women lived their lives. My interest is in finding how a given text creates and deploys a discourse of social (class-based) relationships. Chapter one of this dissertation connects three central ideas of the study. First, it

problematizes separate spheres ideology, lest texts by women become privatized, separated from the economic sites that inform them. Second, I consider the ideological importance of generic conventions, such as marriages at the end of comedies, the convention of sport in pastoral, and conventional figures such as whores. Each, I argue, is intimately linked to class status, class differences, and class consciousness. I conclude the chapter by writing briefly about the versions of marxism that inform and shape my approach in the following chapters. In particular, I link the ideas of homology and symbolic capital, both of which serve as a means of articulating the function of class in a study of women's texts.

The rest of the dissertation is divided into two parts. Part one, "Class Difference," considers two dramatic texts by aristocratic women: Lady Mary Wroth's *Loves Victory* in chapter two and Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle's *The Lady Contemplation* in chapter three. Both texts strategically pit against each other two characters at opposite ends of the social spectrum. The characters' respective class difference is the grounds on which the texts assert the upper-class character's worth. To this end, I work from Jameson's reminder that "difference is ... understood as a relational concept, rather than as the mere inert inventory of unrelated diversity."<sup>18</sup> This mode of creating privilege—excluding a lower-class other—in turn constitutes a classed position for the author-functions of the texts. Part two, "Class Consciousness," considers the flip-side of the notion of difference by focusing on what classed concerns might produce certain representational choices. Chapter four, which treats Elizabeth Cary's *Tragedie of Mariam*, considers the material bases of the text's ideological investment in its main character's status as symbolic capital. Chapter five extends this economic abstraction by analyzing a group of texts, each of which notes the varying functions of whoredom in

connection with money as a determiner of class (and gender) identity.

The terms “class difference” and “class consciousness” are not meant to be mutually exclusive; one necessarily implies the other since there can be no class difference without a corresponding sense of class identity, and vice-versa. I also do not present these terms as uncontested theoretical sites. For example, the term “class consciousness” introduces an anachronism if it is taken as a reference within orthodox Marxism. It has been noted, most recently by Jonathan Goldberg, that class *solidarity* is difficult to find during pre-Industrial England. Goldberg is reluctant for example, for any one woman writer to become a “spokeswoman for her class” because “a modern notion of class solidarity intrudes in the argument.”<sup>19</sup> The option, then, for discussing class during this time period seems to be very limited. Wendy Wall writes of Peter Laslett as “representative of many critics who argue that despite obvious gradations in status and rank, the Renaissance world was a ‘one-class society,’ because there was ‘only one body of persons capable of concerted action over the whole area of society.’”<sup>20</sup> Yet this definition actually presents a *two* class society in “Renaissance” England—with one class acting as “one body of persons capable of concerted action” and the other class the recipients of that “concerted action.” In other words, Laslett describes a relation between the dominant and the subordinate while erasing the class that is not in power. Laslett’s definition implies that power structures are not based in notions of class, and that class difference is inconsequential. My focus on class leads me to make no generalization that any one woman could be a spokesperson for her class, especially in pre-Industrial England. But it would be a mistake to ignore the obvious benefits and consequences of class identity which I argue does in fact exist in seventeenth-century England. The term “consciousness” functions in this dissertation as a means by which

traditionally marxist concerns are evoked, but my notion of consciousness as an emergent, but unorganized, awareness of class cohesion signals a qualification of the marxist construction of post-Industrial class struggle and solidarity.

Finally, I will admit that a focus on class identity in tandem with a delimiting of included authors by sex seems to be a decision based on biographical facts. The methodological point of my dissertation is that it is very important that we account for texts written by women for the express reason that they have a history of devaluation that has enabled a particular narrative of "Renaissance/early modern England" from which, in large part, women and their textual artifacts have been removed. I am not claiming that women writers are "free," as it were, from gender or other constructions and therefore in a position to see class from a transcendent vantage point. I am merely trying to counter assumptions that Woman is an homogenous category of analysis separate and distinct from other sites of identity formation. Ferguson acknowledges the need for this reservation as well. She writes that we cannot assume "that women's gender, irrespective of other social differences including access to literacy, allows us to constitute them as a social group and as our object of analysis" (356). As I hope will become clear from my chapters, my interest in class informs the way I read dramatic texts by women rather than inciting a nostalgic need to read the women themselves.



## INTRODUCTION NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Carol Thomas Neely, "Constructing the Subject: Feminist Practice and the New Renaissance Discourses," *English Literary Renaissance* 18 (1988), 5-18. Citation from 5.
- <sup>2</sup> Neely, 15 n31. Neely cites Nancy K. Miller on the strategy of "over-reading." See Miller's "Arachnologies: The Woman, The Text, and the Critic," in *The Poetics of Gender*, edited by Nancy K. Miller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 270-95.
- <sup>3</sup> Margaret W. Ferguson, "Moderation and Its Discontents: Recent Work on Renaissance Women," *Feminist Studies* 20 (1994), 349-66. Citation from 355. Ferguson historicizes the focus on autonomy: "I can see fairly clearly that the emphasis on individual women's 'autonomy' ... is in part a reaction to a sense of despair about the possibilities of collective feminist action under the conservative economic and political policies of the 1980s in both Britain and the United States" (364).
- <sup>4</sup> Margaret W. Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy J. Vickers, eds. *Rewriting the Renaissance: the Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), xxii.
- <sup>5</sup> Much of this work built on Ruth Hughey, "Cultural Interests of Women in England, from 1524-1640, Indicated in the Writings of Women," Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University, 1932; Charlotte Kohler, "The Elizabethan Woman of Letters: The Extent of Her Literary Activity," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1936; and Ruth Kelso, *Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance* (1956; reprint, Urbana, Chicago, London: University of Illinois Press, 1978).
- <sup>6</sup> Equally positive alternate models are also provided by the collection of essays *Voicing Women: Gender and Sexuality in Early Modern Writing*, edited by Kate Chedgzoy, Melanie Hansen, and Suzanne Trill (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1997); and Jonathan Goldberg, *Desiring Women Writers: English Renaissance Examples* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).
- <sup>7</sup> Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth, *Representing Women in Renaissance England* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1997), 1.
- <sup>8</sup> Listed in Marta Straznicky, "Recent Studies in Closet Drama," *English Literary Renaissance* 28 (1998), 142-59.
- <sup>9</sup> Shaver's collection (to be published in 1999 by Johns Hopkins University Press) will include four plays: *Bell in Campo* (1662), *Loves Adventures* (1662), *The Bridals* (1668), and *The Convent of Pleasure* (1668).
- <sup>10</sup> I borrow the distinction between "writer as woman" and "woman as writer" from Marta Straznicky, "'Profane Stoical Paradoxes': *The Tragedie of Mariam* and Sidnean Closet Drama," *English Literary Renaissance* 24 (1994), 104-34. See 105, n6.
- <sup>11</sup> Dymrna Callaghan, "Re-reading Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedie of Mariam, Faire Queene of Jewry*," in *Women, "Race," and Writing in the Early Modern Period*, edited by Margo Hendricks and Patricia Parker (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 163-77. Citation from 165. See also Stephanie Wright, "The Canonization of Elizabeth Cary," in *Voicing Women*, 55-68. Wright's essay is a strongly-worded critique of biographical criticism of Cary's works.
- <sup>12</sup> Joan Wallach Scott, *Feminism and History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 3.
- <sup>13</sup> Clare A. Lees, "Gender and Exchange in *Piers Plowman*," in *Class and Gender in Early English Literature*, edited by Britton J. Harwood and Gillian R. Overing (Bloomington and Indianapolis: University of Indiana Press, 1994), 112-30. Citation from 112.
- <sup>14</sup> See Judith Butler, "Merely Cultural," *New Left Review* 227 (1998), 33-44. Citing Paul Gilroy and Stuart Hall, Butler reminds that "race may be one modality in which class is lived. In this way, race and class are rendered distinct analytically only to realize that the analysis of the one cannot proceed without the analysis of the other" (38).

<sup>15</sup> See Kim F. Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 18; and Ania Loomba, *Gender, Race, Renaissance Drama* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), 1-2.

<sup>16</sup> Raymond Williams, *Keywords* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 68. Williams distinguishes between "class" as a social formation and as a "category." To consider class as a social formation entails understanding it as a created process of distinguishing between people, whereas the category of class depends on an innate grouping of people including "all who are objectively in that economic situation" (68).

<sup>17</sup> Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?" in *Contemporary Literary Criticism: Literary and Cultural Studies*, edited by Robert Con Davis and Ronald Schleifer (New York and London: Longman, 1989), 262-75. Citation from 267.

<sup>18</sup> Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1981), 41. See also Butler, "Merely Cultural." Butler writes, "difference is the condition of possibility of identity or, rather, its constitutive limit: what makes its articulation possible [is] at the same time what makes any final or closed articulation possible" (37).

<sup>19</sup> Goldberg, 10.

<sup>20</sup> Wendy Wall, *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 11 n20. Wall cites Laslett, *The World We Have Lost*.

## NOTE ON THE TEXTS

Throughout this study I retain seventeenth-century spelling, punctuation, superscripted letters, abbreviations, and emphases in the texts by women that I cite. The one exception is Behn's *The Rover* (1677), which exists in a carefully edited modern edition.<sup>1</sup> Because of limitations imposed by modern typeface, I have modernized only the numerous occurrences of the long "s." My decision to preserve seventeenth-century typography (including "vv" for "w") was largely influenced by Jeffrey Masten's persuasive argument in *Textual Intercourse*, which I quote at length:

I retain early modern spelling, both as a reminder of historical otherness—these texts were produced in a culture that lacked (without knowing it) our insistence on consistency, uniformity, and prescriptive grammar—and because ... the routine standardizations of modern editing are often at odds with a historicist critical practice .... To attach a name to a book that did not bear one, to modernize, standardize, repunctuate, and emend in our own image the texts of another period, to elide or rewrite, often silently, the apparatus in which a text originally circulated—all of these acts relinquish and/or ignore important evidence of the culture we read."<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, my decision to maintain the seventeenth-century features of texts is not motivated by a desire to privilege the original text's "purity," or the author's intention, but rather by a desire to evoke what Masten terms the "alterity" of the text, and, by extension, of the culture it circulated in—one *different* from our own.

In the case of contested or ambiguous lines which might pose an unnecessary challenge to the reading of my analysis because they are not modernized, I will note in a footnote accepted and useful emendations from

modern editions.

Below I list the source I have used for each major text treated in this study.

Behn, A. *The Second Part of the Rover*. London, 1681. Huntington Library copy, Early English Books, 1641-1700, microfilm reel 203.

All citations are from the 1681 quarto. This play uses the long dash, which I record as “—.” I cite by page number.

Behn, Mrs. A. *The Feign'd Curtizans, or, A Night's Intrigue*. London, 1679. British Library copy, Early English Books, 1641-1700, microfilm reel 446.

All citations are from the 1679 quarto. This play uses the long dash, which I record as “—.” I cite by page number.

Boothby, Mrs. F. *Marcellia, or the Treacherous Friend*. London, 1670. Early English Books, 1641-1700, microfilm reel 172 (no source library listed).

All citations are from the 1670 quarto from microfilm, the only seventeenth-century printing of the play. I cite by siglum.

E[lizabeth]. C[ary]. *Tragedie of Mariam, Fair Queene of Jewry*. London, 1613.

All citations are from the Malone Society reprint of the 1613 quarto.<sup>3</sup> Dunstan and Greg consulted three copies of the quarto in the British Library, as well as one copy in the Bodleian. I cite by line number as inserted in the reprint which numbers lines, including scene headings and stage directions, consecutively through the entire play.

Cavendish, Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle. *Playes Written by the Thrice NOBLE, ILLUSTRIOUS AND Excellent Princess, THE LADY MARCHIONESS OF NEWCASTLE*. London, 1662. Bodleian Library copy, Early English Books, 1641-1700, microfilm reel 502.

\_\_\_\_\_. *PLAYS Never before Printed. Written By the Thrice Noble, Illustrious, and Excellent PRINCESSE, THE Duchess of Newcastle*. London, 1668. Huntington Library copy, Early English Books, 1641-1700, microfilm reel 674.

All citations are from the seventeenth-century folios. Each folio was printed only once. I cite by page number.

[Wroth, Lady Mary.] *Loves Victory*. Ms. c. 1624.

All citations are from the Penshurst manuscript, which is reproduced in photographic facsimile beside Brennan's lightly modernized and sometimes emended typescript of it.<sup>4</sup> Brennan's facsimile is of the only complete extant copy of the manuscript (one other version is held by the Huntington Library). The spelling of the Huntington manuscript's title is "Love's Victorie" while the Penshurst manuscript bears the spelling "Loves Victory." Some critics solve this dilemma by simply modernizing the title; however, Roberts differentiates the manuscripts by maintaining the spelling unique to each.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, since I cite the Penshurst manuscript without modernizing it, I use its spelling of the title. I cite by act and by Brennan's inserted line numbers.

## NOTE ON THE TEXTS NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Jane Spencer, ed., *The Rover and Other Plays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

<sup>2</sup> Jeffrey Masten, *Textual Intercourse: Collaboration, Authorship, and Sexualities in Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 11.

<sup>3</sup> A. C. Dunstan and W. W. Greg, eds., *The Tragedie of Mariam* (London: Oxford University Press, 1914).

<sup>4</sup> Michael G. Brennan, ed., *Lady Mary Wroth's Love's Victory: The Penshurst Manuscript* (London: The Roxburge Club, 1988).

<sup>5</sup> Josephine A. Roberts, "The Huntington Manuscript of Lady Mary Wroth's Play, *Loves Victory*," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 46 (1983), 156-74.

## CHAPTER I

### DE-PRIVATIZING SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY DRAMA BY WOMEN

**"Before all women's historians disappear into the land of gender, language, binary oppositions, and representations, we need to remain ever mindful of the necessity of grounding our analysis in the material realities of class, race, sexuality, social structure, and politics."**

**—Susan M. Reverby and Dorothy O. Helly**

#### I. Public and Private

My decision to write my dissertation on drama by women came before I decided to approach it as a class study. What drew me to seventeenth-century drama in general was the fact that the criticism treated these dramatic texts as unabashedly public texts. Texts could be read within an unlimited number of interpretations and methods; the positing of its realm of influence, and the ways in which dramas absorbed and produced their cultural and economic situatedness was foremost in the most compelling criticism. I believed therefore, that I would find a treasury of work treating dramatic texts by women as culturally situated, politically contingent texts in the same way as other plays from the seventeenth century are treated. But I found instead that because most of the texts I work with were not performed, they are often not accorded a public function. Indeed, drama by women is often devalued in tandem with the performance bias against "closet," or unperformed, drama. In the context of such plays, "closet" is equated with "private" because play-acting has been privileged over reading or printing.<sup>1</sup> Marta Straznicky has

noted, for example, that “the performance bias effectively excludes all pre-Restoration women playwrights, none of whom wrote for the stage,”<sup>2</sup> and claims “the theoretical principle implied ... is that public and commercial literature is more significant in the history of women writers than other modes of literary production.”<sup>3</sup> The term “closet drama” therefore refers solely to the lack of performance on a stage—that plays were printed or circulated in manuscript appears irrelevant. However, the practices of manuscript circulation, printing, and reading<sup>4</sup> must count toward an understanding of the plays’ public availability. Writing about Elizabeth Brackley and Jane Cavendish’s manuscript folio, Margaret Ezell notes that “by confusing ‘public’ with ‘publication,’ we have misinterpreted the manuscript activities of these early women writers. There was indeed a self-limiting readership, but this in no way indicates that this readership was uncritical or unsophisticated or that the authors lacked a ‘public’ voice and subject matter.”<sup>5</sup> As Straznicky has pointed out, the ahistoricized term “closet” is used to mark unperformed drama as inferior to performed plays: “the validity of the twin equations theater/public and closet/private ... are frequently used as transhistorical constants and underly the negative reception of closet drama.”<sup>6</sup> Similarly, Margaret Ezell notes that when a male writer

writes for a limited readership in a specific environment, it is referred to as “coterie” writing: when a woman of the period does so, it becomes “closet” writing, a negative and diminishing adjective, in line with the view of women writers of this period as isolated individuals who did not seek a wide audience because their talents were discouraged and unappreciated.<sup>7</sup>

Both Ezell and Straznicky object that this privatized view of women writers has led critics to conceive of women “closet” playwrights as either



unimportant or extraordinary, and to consequently deify Aphra Behn as the “first” female playwright, since her plays were produced onstage. The performed versus “closet” dichotomy is a way that critics have set values on dramatic literature, removing from serious consideration those plays that did not at least nominally participate in the public market.

Ezell and Straznicky fight a relegation of literature by women to a merely private realm. My readings of seventeenth-century drama by women will do the same. I use the term “privatized” to signal a difference between “private” in its commonly used meaning as something secret or apart from what is “public,” and “privatized,” which implies that something that is not private is strategically made to appear so. When I suggest that I am “de-privatizing” drama by women, I mean that I will consider the ways that women’s literature is implicated within a cultural and economic context. I will suggest in this chapter that the application of the term “closet drama” is symptomatic of a larger private/public split that often structures ideas about gender, especially in studies which do not consider class, economic standing, and material conditions. Studies that focus on “gender” for example, are in danger of essentializing across class and race lines (for example) in order to create an homogenous category of “Woman.” This chapter argues that it is necessary to rewrite the notion of separate public and private spheres that has structured our understandings of literary texts, and will challenge the notion that dramatic texts by women that are not performed should be thought of as “private.” The texts I consider, rather than simply reflecting or distorting a version of the culture in which they were produced, are themselves a social practice of class formation.

With the exception of the texts in chapter five, the plays in this study are indeed usually classified as “closet” drama, defined in the twentieth

century as a genre “designed to be read rather than played,”<sup>8</sup> or “plays ‘that were never acted, and were never meant to be.’”<sup>9</sup> Alfred Harbage counts approximately 150 “closet dramas” written between 1500 and 1660 (which would exclude prolific writers of closet drama such as Margaret Cavendish).<sup>10</sup> Examples of printed plays now regarded as closet dramas include Mary Herbert’s *The Tragedie of Antonie* (1592), a translation of Robert Garnier’s *Marc Antoine*; <sup>11</sup> Samuel Daniel’s *Cleopatra* (1594); Fulke Greville’s *Mustapha* (1603); Elizabeth Cary’s *Tragedie of Mariam* (1613); and John Milton’s *Samson Agonistes* (1671). Manuscript plays such as Jane Lumley’s *Iphegenia* (composed c. 1553) and Mary Wroth’s *Loves Victory* (composed c. 1621) are also currently considered closet drama.

A brief etymology of the term “closet” reveals why it has been used to describe unperformed (“private”) drama. While the OED does not list “closet drama” as an entry, Jonas Barish has traced the term back to the 1820s.<sup>12</sup> The general meaning of the closet as a “room for privacy or retirement, a private room” obtains from the fourteenth century (def. 1a). The references in the OED for “closet” before the seventeenth century suggest that the closet was a place for individual devotion (def. 1b). Around 1600, the use of the term “closet” refers as well to a place where valuables and legal papers were repositied (defs. 3a and b). Critics such as Stephanie Jed, Alan Stewart, and Lisa Jardine write about the completely private nature of the closet.<sup>13</sup> These critics even gender the privacy of the closet, arguing that when a closet repositied valuables and papers treating the estate, it is a masculine closet that is off limits for a woman. Therefore, while a man’s closet is thought of as a place for work, sometimes containing two chairs as Stewart notes, a woman’s closet is configured as a wholly private devotional space. However, in a recent article on Gertrude’s closet in *Hamlet*, Lena Cowen Orlin persuasively argues

that this “scholarly paradigm” (50) of the completely private closet “has been used to build what threatens to become an unexamined truism, that the early modern closet was a space in which privacy was habitually sought, and privacy was uniquely found.”<sup>14</sup> Orlin suggests, rather, that “privacy is a construct, not a fact, and constructs are historically specific” (47). She cites many details that counter a reading of the closet as only a private space, such as the ornate decoration of Anne Drury’s closet—“it is such a showpiece that it is difficult to believe that it was exclusively private” (50)—and letters from Thomas Knyvett to his wife that often instruct her to enter his closet and find particular papers (50-1). Orlin provides a revision of the idea of the private closet in which the possibilities of the public function of the closet are emphasized.

The implication of Orlin’s essay for the study of “closet drama” is clear: the designation of unperformed plays as private in the same way that the closet is private has become an “unexamined truism.” The early uses of the idea of “closet” to refer to writing gesture *toward* what we mean by “closet drama” but do not use that exact phrase to designate a genre in the same way that W. W. Greg’s self-conscious, taxonomical use of the term does. For example, in her introductory letter to her husband’s biography, Margaret Cavendish writes of “*the Censures of this Age*”:

*they’l make no doubt to stain even Your Lordships Loyal, Noble and Heroick Actions, as well as they do mine, though yours have been of War and Fighting, mine of Contemplating and Writing: Yours were performed publickly in the Field, mine privately in my Closet: Yours had many thousand Eye-witnesses, mine none but my Waiting-maids.*<sup>15</sup>

Considering this passage, Straznicky writes that “it is clear then, that Cavendish understood writing and publication to be a form of public action”<sup>16</sup> through an analogy with her husband’s civic work. This example from

Cavendish's letter does not assert that these works are or should be written or read only in the closet. And her statement includes all of her writing, not specifically her plays—her poems, for example, are not qualified as “closet” (private) poetry. Therefore, this example (as well as the *Marino Faliero* use of “closet”) designates a place of writing, but not a genre (which is to say, that by these terms, plays written or read in the closet can be edited for performance, and that a play once performed could also be read in the closet).

The prefaces to Cavendish's first folio of plays are pointed that her plays are not “closet” in the private sense of that term. The opening letter, addressed to her husband, of *Playes Written by the Thrice NOBLE, ILLUSTRIOUS AND Excellent Princess, THE LADY MARCHIONESS OF NEWCASTLE*. (1662), claims that her plays fall short of his, “*which is the reason I send them forth to be printed, rather than keep them concealed in hopes to have them first Acted*” (A3r). While her husband's plays (in hopes of performance) are “concealed,” showing that plays written for performance can nevertheless be kept in the closet, hers are “printed.” This distinction is clearly used to point out that the printing of her plays is a public act, even though they are not performed on the stage. It is surely important then that in Cavendish's folios her plays are not designated as “closet dramas” but as “Comedies,” “Tragi-comedies,” or “Come-tragedies” (sic), that they include often- extensive stage direction, and that their epilogues and prologues use exclusively visual metaphors when referring to the play and its audience—all of which blur the differences between reading or writing in a closet as a prescription and seeing a play onstage. Cavendish herself suggests a sort of “performance” of her plays:

Playes must be read to the nature of those several humours, or passions, as are exprest by Writing: for they must not read a Scene as they would read a Chapter; for Scenes must be read as if they were

spoke or Acted .... in Reading only the voice is employed; but when as a Play is well and skillfully read, the very sound of the Voice that enters through the Ears, doth present the Actions to the Eyes of the Fancy as lively as if it were really Acted. (A6v)

She distinguishes here between public stage acting and the private reading of a play. She imagines a middle ground between the two where reading (aloud, apparently) can “present the Actions to the Eyes of the Fancy as lively as if it were really Acted.” Her comments remind us that it is misleading to designate her plays wholly private or closet.

I am not trying to claim “closet” drama should be thought of in exactly the same way as staged drama. When set in the context of the complications I have pointed out, any printed drama becomes a conundrum of how to construct text in relationship to performance. “Closet” drama is *text*, but it isn’t *only* text, in that the use of *drama* implies that publicity is still important, despite a probable lack of stage performance. But performed drama presents this conundrum as well. Writing about texts of performed plays, Jeffrey Masten asserts that early British playtexts “were generally made accessible to readers only as an afterthought capitalizing on their theatrical popularity.”<sup>17</sup> Plays therefore present themselves “not as a communication between writer and reader [as other books do], but rather as a representation/recapitulation of a theatrical experience, a communication between actors and audience” (16). Masten’s decentering of the printed text here (rightfully) privileges performance as the site of critical analysis;<sup>18</sup> however, dramatic texts that were not performed are thus suddenly out of rigorous critical purview.

One way of addressing this conundrum is to make unperformed drama no different from staged drama. In S.P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies’ anthology, *Renaissance Drama by Women*, the choice between text and

performance is clear: the editors have added stage directions where there were none, and have also changed the conventions of the text to highlight performance traditions, ostensibly to prove that the play is performable. For example, Cerasano and Wynne-Davies' addition to the opening stage direction of *The Tragedy of Mariam* reads: "[Enter CHORUS who remain on stage throughout the play. Afterwards, enter centre stage ] MARIAM alone."<sup>19</sup> The decision, then, to have the chorus come on the stage even before Mariam alters the original designation that Mariam be "alone" onstage. Such vision enables the editors to assert early seventeenth-century women's agency in writing drama: they claim the authors "rejected the public theatre as a venue for their plays [which] underscores the closeted nature of women's lives during the Renaissance" (4). Since women were categorically excluded from performance in and writing for the public theater until 1660, it does not seem accurate to say that women rejected the stage.<sup>20</sup> This formulation assigns them the agency to have written for the public stage if they had wanted. The anthology then appears to construct closet drama as distinct from public forms, and yet its editorial practice turns that drama into a public form by performatizing it.

Another mode of addressing the split between "closet" and performed drama is to insist that "closet" drama is intentionally a separate genre from performed drama. For example, Straznicky usefully advocates seeing "non-commercial, unperformed drama as an important lateral, rather than inferior, tradition in early women's dramatic writing" (357). This suggestion certainly keeps unperformed drama from being devalued, as long as this "lateral" move factors in its public context (as Straznicky's work certainly does), and does not still devalue it because it appears to be generically separate from performed plays. That the texts are not performed is part of their public

function; simply assuming that the plays were or could have been performed rewrites some elements of the plays.

This study will illustrate that the public/private split is specious when dealing with women's literature for the reason that women writers and their artifactually present texts are always situated in historical ideological structures. The plays I have chosen for this study show, through their production of class difference and consciousness, the ways that public economies always already structure the "private" sphere and vice-versa, effectively blurring and making relative those distinctions. Even though it refers to public dramatic forms, Jean E. Howard's notion of "theatrical practices" is a useful one here because it opens up what counts as theatricality, and shows that "the theatre" was never an insular institution. Howard suggests that a consideration of the ideological importance of the theater must be set in a context of other public practices as well as within theatrical discourses. She writes: "I have in part found it useful to focus on representations of theatricality as a way of talking concretely about the ideological function of the Renaissance public stage."<sup>21</sup> One of these practices must be the use of theatrical discourse in printed texts of dramas, a necessity that will make those dramas that were not performed part of the social discourse engaged in ideological functions. Howard suggests that "though the signs of struggle are often effaced or ignored, texts are produced and read in conditions of contest" (18-19). She considers texts as social practice, underscoring the ways that their publicity ensures their participation in cultural and economic discourses and institutions.

## II. Conventional Closure and Ideology

My critique of the differentiation between “closet” drama and the public stage has already alluded to a larger context, that of feminist scholarship exploring women’s participation in private and public spheres. Marxist theory, because of its interest in modes of (public) production, often excuses itself from explaining the ways that public production enables and relies on women’s (domestic) labor, thus excising the contributions of women’s labor from an historical picture of economic relations. This charge has been levelled at marxism and has certainly been addressed by philosophers such as Linda Nicholson and Nancy Fraser in their work on Habermas, and by collections such as Benhabib and Cornell’s addressing the “production paradigm” which threatens to ignore women’s domestic labor.<sup>22</sup> The methodology implied by separating private from public spheres has structured both social histories of women and criticism on literature by women. Notions about private and public have been most thoroughly explored by feminist marxist critics invested in making women’s (domestic) labor and oppression matter. They argue that women’s work has been devalued based on marxism’s focus on the production of goods, which effectively removes the private (domestic) sphere from production schemas.<sup>23</sup> That women’s work will not participate in (public) economy is guaranteed, as Maureen Quilligan asserts: “the development of capitalism cut the home off from the workplace, not merely alienating the worker from his labor but ensuring that female (‘unpaid’) household work would have no value in the new economy.”<sup>24</sup> The sexual division of labor, therefore, is one way that the public/private dichotomy is maintained.

There are two ways that an attempt is made to address the distinction



between the two spheres: scholars either discuss what labor was performed by women, thereby showing that women did actually participate in the public sphere, or they privilege domestic work over “public” work. The first solution still does not account for the public profitability of domestic work, and the second allows the private to acquire a new prominence, but nevertheless keeps it separate from the public sphere. Current criticism on literature by women replicates these two modes by which a pseudo-break is instituted between the spheres: it either reads literature by women as published literary production, which tends to cause critics to conclude that women writers were extraordinary or autonomous because their writing was then a transgression of boundaries that not follow the typical domestic script for women’s actions, or, it reads literature for the ways in which its content constructs writing and domestic or private work (including writing), but not as a continuation of public use and exchange, thereby privatizing the literature without seeing it in any other (public) context. The text, in both schemas, becomes wholly privatized and self-reflexive, and is always read for the ways it comments on the life of writing women.

A third option exists for determining the contingencies between private and public in literary studies. Literature can be read for the ways it recognizes and produces public organizing data, for example, race, gender, nationality, religion, class; therefore, any privatization of literature by women should always be mediated by the ways the literature relies on and (re)produces social forms. This third option follows the recent work in feminist social history, which often is concerned with locating class status in relation to the lives of real women, which has ramifications for literary scholarship, as will be my focus here.

Social historians Susan M. Reverby and Dorothy O. Helly’s

introduction to their collection of essays is a useful survey of feminist critics of the last two decades who have contributed to theorizing the contingency of the two spheres. The editors assert that

the emptiness of public and private as categories became an important refrain among those concerned with illuminating the specificities of gender, culture, class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and historical time. As evidence mounted that the public/private dichotomy could obscure as well as reveal how women and men actually lived their lives, the voices proclaiming the role of this dichotomy as ideology became more insistent."<sup>25</sup>

The editors cite work by Michelle Rosaldo, Gayle Rubin, Linda Kerber, and Linda Nicholson, among many others, as helping to shape approaches to rewriting ideas naturalized through the ideology of the separate spheres. Rubin's 1975 essay, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex," is often looked upon as an important early work that articulates the ways that public modes of production, exchange, and consumption privatize the female within kinship systems as a means of ensuring the efficiency of that public sphere. Rubin calls for anthropological inquiry into "the evolution of commodity forms in women, systems of land tenure, political arrangements, subsistence technology, etc.," because "economic and political analyses are incomplete if they do not consider women, marriage, and sexuality."<sup>26</sup> And indeed, a consideration of sexuality, marriage, and gender is incomplete without factoring in political and economic forces. Rubin's work is still used to uncover ideologies that keep the private privatized. Writing about sexuality, Judith Butler has recently noted

in the work of Gayle Rubin and others, the normative reproduction of gender was essential to the reproduction of heterosexuality and the family. Thus, the sexual division of labour could not be understood apart from the reproduction of gendered persons .... Thus, the regulation of sexuality was systematically tied to the mode of production proper to the functioning of political economy."<sup>27</sup>

Butler's work shows that even sites of identity that are considered personal or private (sexuality, family) are nevertheless indicated in and by "the mode of production proper to the functioning of political economy."

Reverby and Helly conclude their introduction by suggesting a continued understanding of the division as ideology: "As the political debate within women's studies [in the 1980s] raged over how to understand the linkages among race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and gender, the weakness of the separate spheres model, which had always been recognized, became more obvious" (14). If criticism of literature by women has been too dependent on maintaining (though certainly not maliciously) the separate spheres, perhaps it is time for an investigation into the areas Reverby and Helly mention: "linkages among race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and gender." Indeed, this is their precise call in the citation that serves as an epigraph to this chapter.

However, there is certainly an operative *discourse* of the separate spheres of "private" and "public"; the most salient notions of women's privacy are naturalized into their difference from what is public, and in that way, they operate to serve what is public from an elided ("private") position. Such discourse constitutes private and public as separate, and such division has a certain (public) function. In a recent article, Louis Montrose makes distinctions between the two spheres, explaining that in Spenser's poems, inspiration comes from what is coded private. He writes:

the binary formulation of public/private that is frequently employed to characterize these poems [Spenser's] tends to privilege privacy as the source of meaning, value, solace. To the private or personal are attached versions of authenticity that may be grounded in an aesthetics of imaginative autonomy, a metaphysics of spiritual transcendence, or a psychology of erotic and familial attachments.<sup>28</sup>

He asserts that this discourse of privacy "suggests ... something akin to ...

circumscribed, imaginative autonomy" (96). Yet rather than let the dichotomy of public/private stand, Montrose successfully blurs the two spheres by pointing out that the conditions of privacy are only found insofar as they are set against what is publicly necessary: "public life is the defining condition of privacy, and ... political subjection is the defining condition of imaginative autonomy. Indeed, the very emergence of a concept of 'privacy' may be construed as an effect of the state's increasing concern to regulate the lives of its subjects" (96). While Montrose speaks here specifically about the condition of patronage such as that between Spenser and Queen Elizabeth, his conclusion to this section is instructional: "privacy is a social and material condition, grounded in the historical and cultural specificities of time and place, rank and gender" (96). Even when he focuses on the domestic--analogous to privacy, but with a more specific location in households--he nevertheless underscores the ways that it is still connected to a public sphere: he writes that the household "is not a place apart from the public sphere so much as it is the nucleus of the social order, the primary site of subjectification" (96).<sup>29</sup>

The ideological presentation of the family Montrose alludes to has been an object of successful reinterpretation because social historians have located important contingencies that de-naturalize the notion of the family. Rayna Rapp, for example, contends that "the notion of the family has been overly objectified and should be seen instead as a cultural device, an ideology, for a larger social purpose: recruitment into household and class."<sup>30</sup> She writes that "it is through their commitment to the concept of the family that people are recruited to the material relations of households" (235). These material relations, such as class, are ideological, and not "natural." In fact, the naturalization of the family, Rapp argues, is the means by which the

dichotomy of the separate spheres is held intact: "Belief in the family acts as a kind of ideological shock absorber which keeps people functioning and diminishes the tensions often generated by those continuous economic processes" (236). And Ellen Ross, in a later section of the same article, citing two other critics dedicated to understanding the "private" in different terms, historicizes the nostalgia for family:

As Christopher Lasch and Kenneth Keniston have recently argued persuasively, privacy--the sense of intimacy and retreat from the world which we associate with today's family--is both an illusion and a piece of twentieth-century ideology. Our 'private' families are ... social products and ... closely intertwined with the public sphere (243).

The "family" as a site of ideological meaning has conventional saliency, and I turn now to the question of literary conventions and their signification.

Not only has the genre of non-performed drama been privatized by secreting it away in the closet, but analysis of the content and function of it has aided and abetted that move by neutralizing the effects of generic closure, especially when that closure mystifies the ideological usage of the family. When texts are privatized, the ideological significance of their genre and the conventions of the drama--the way they work to uphold the dominant discourses and modes of experience--are often elided. Jameson writes: "Genres are essentially literary *institutions*, or social contracts between a writer and a specific public, whose function is to specify the proper use of a particular cultural artifact."<sup>31</sup> Conventions then function to keep the text from being "abandoned to a drifting multiplicity of uses" (106). Of course, Jameson notes that once "texts free themselves more and more from an immediate performance situation, it becomes ever more difficult to enforce a given generic rule on their readers" (106). In order to still study conventions, however, Jameson asserts that "it would seem necessary to invent a new,

historically reflexive, way of using categories, such as those of genre, which are so clearly implicated in the literary history and the formal production they were traditionally supposed to classify and neutrally to describe" (107). This challenge is exactly what I pick up in this section. I want to posit, not that discourses are wholly successful in interpellating their readers, but that a conventional function of closure is to place readers in a particular position scripted by ideological requirements. In particular, I am interested in the place of the female character during conventional closure and the impact of that position on gender and class identity. In all but one of the plays in this study, the female characters are either dead, married, or have promised to be married as a means of offering a sense of closure and in turn identifying the generic mode (comedy, tragedy). Even the death of a female character implies values associated with marriage, since often the female characters who die at the end have either refused marriage or have broken contractual promises presumed in marriage. This closure therefore functions to uphold the ideological and material use of marriage—a "recruitment into household and class"—and reinforces the consequent ideological place of the female character, writer, and reader.

To illustrate the ways a privatized text can be recontextualized within its necessary use of public representational convention—marriage in this case—I want here to contrast two characters and then consider the fate of one of them in detail. The representation of each character does social work through literary means, and these occur within particular possibilities for conventional closure. Both characters are from Cavendish's 1662 folio of plays: Lady Prudence marries happily at the end of *The Publick Wooing*, and Lady Sansparaile dies at the end of *Youth's Glory and Death's Banquet*. Prudence vows to be wooed only in public because she thinks it is the "safest

way to swim in the full Ocean,"<sup>32</sup> since she (and her wooers) would have witnesses which would keep them accountable for their actions and words. She believes public courtship will allay "so many unequal matches, so many perjurd Consciences, so many devirginate and forsaken Maids" (372). She therefore interviews numerous suitors, each of whom pleads his case to her on a stage. Prudence then decides upon each wooer's suit in a speech given in front of the people gathered at the stage, and eventually chooses an appropriate husband. Prudence is often paralleled with Lady Sanspareile because they both transgressively speak in public. Sansparaile, whose very name suggests her singularity ("without like"), is educated by her father, gives learned lectures to the scholars of her day, renounces marriage, and then, in perhaps a cause-and-effect trajectory, dies unexpectedly.

Within the discourse of literary criticism on early British texts by women, what is most noteworthy about both characters is their apparent exercise of autonomy through speaking in public. This behavior, especially, and perhaps only, when it is recorded by a woman writer, is generally considered subversive and an indicator of autonomy, or at least resistant to proscriptions, and that autonomy/agency is then ascribed to the writer as a figure of the character. Indeed, the mention of publicity in the title of *Publick Wooing* appears to foreshadow a transgressive mode of representation in the text. If silence is one of the main strictures to be heeded by women in this time period, then drama is often construed as immediately subversive because it contains representations of women who must speak. At stake in criticism treating these and similar characters is the characters' resistance to received modes of representation, which in turn implies the author's resistance to cultural strictures. For example, it has been suggested that the private/public distinction structures the choice each of Cavendish's heroines

must make: "Is she to stay within the bounds of private honour and chastity? ... Or is she to sally forth and seek public acclaim and fame?"<sup>33</sup> The characters' act of speaking symbolizes female publicity and authorship, thereby creating the character as a stand-in for the author. But texts by women do not intrinsically or essentially reveal subversive authors; a subversive character can function to uphold dominant ideology, which can underscore an author's complicity.

The assumption made by feminist readings of these characters (and similar ones) is that any representation of female speech is a positive signal of resistance. For example, these two plays have been seen as the place where "the value of public speaking is ... openly defended."<sup>34</sup> The characters' acts of speaking are therefore highly praised: "Lady Sanspareille's performance—dressed in white bridal satin before an audience of lovers, delivering an oration denouncing marriage as an impediment to the contemplative life—is the acme of sexual provocation and the platonic woman's will to power."<sup>35</sup> The conclusion reached indicates intentional authorial protection of that authority: "Cavendish uses theatrical tropes in her first volume of plays to legitimize a self which is envisaged not merely as authentic, but as fantastically inflated and absolute."<sup>36</sup> This in turn might suggest that "the theatre for Cavendish represents a locus of multiple possibilities—it liberates women from gender constrictions, and it liberates the 'incorporeal' imagination into making fictions."<sup>37</sup> These claims for women's speech—liberation from constrictions, will to power—do not always take the outcome of that speech into consideration as an indicator of its function.

I argue that such progressive interpretations are not wholly supported by the plot of the play, its sense of closure, or even by the assertions of the characters. Such conclusions are reached without taking into consideration,



in this case, Prudence's marriage or Sanspareille's odd death.<sup>38</sup> In fact, it is immediately after denouncing marriage and claiming she will never marry that Sanspareille falls ill without satisfactory diagnosis. From that point on, she speaks only her dying verses. What we might champion in Sanspareille's speeches, or by the act of her speaking, surely must be tempered by her untimely and unexplained death. Linda R. Payne suggests that

*Youths Glory* provides the most disturbing manifestation of Cavendish's ambivalence.... Sanspareille succeeds in earning the world's respect, but then inexplicably sickens and dies. Was it just too inconceivable that this remarkable woman could continue to bloom in a public role, particularly when further estranged from her sex by her vow of celibacy? (29)

Any public interaction or exposure publicly speaking women have can be activated in the service of ideology by making even that publicity complicit, and without the "ambivalence" that Payne ascribes to the author. For example, Lady Prudence rationalizes her speaking by insinuating that her father's death designates her mode of wooing. Gathering "*a company of Ladies and Knights, whom she had invited to hear her Resolutions,*" she says she will

declare a vain vow ... which Vow I made since my Father the Lord Sage 's death. The Vow is, never to receive a Lovers Address, or to answer a Lovers Sute but in a publick Assembly .... it is requisite, especially to such young women which are Orphans, who like small and weak Vessels, that are destitute of Guide or Pilot, are left on the wide Sea-faring World to ruinous waves, and inconstant weather; even so young women are to the Appetites of greedy men.

She even insists that, in the absence of a father, her audience fulfills that role for her: "I desire my Friends and Acquaintances to be as witnesses of my behaviour and words to my loving and Matrimonial Suters; and in this you will be as Parents to the Fatherless, as Judges to Pleaders, and Gods to Men"

(372). Therefore, she speaks in public not to assert her difference from other women as a publicly-speaking woman, or her autonomy from and subsequent subversion of modes of privacy, but to protect her chastity since she is a “small and weak Vessel”<sup>39</sup> (the very thing that designates her as a conventionally “good” seventeenth-century female character): “I’m all for Publick Wooing, so no stain / Upon my Reputation will remain” (354). Such a statement could be read as an humility topos that allows the character enough flexibility to be strategically duplicitous; but this consideration is tempered by the fact that she speaks in public, not to escape patriarchal rule, but to re-place herself within it. She speaks to find a husband, and is not critical of marriage as an institution. As the scene I will consider below from *The Publick Wooing* will make clear, there are other means of interpreting the female character of a play by considering a text’s participation in a “public” way that accounts for the mode of conventional closure. Prudence’s public wooing is activated as a means of efficiently replacing her in a social relationship that guarantees her inferior status while conventionally forming and reinforcing class privilege through a consciousness of economic difference.

Among the Country Gentleman, the Courtier, the Bashfull Wooer, the Amorous, the Divine, the Lawyer and the Farmer, one of Lady Prudence’s wooers is the Citizen.<sup>40</sup> His speech reveals that he is a merchant in pursuit of wealth, rather than the more abstract and elusive “Fame.” He hopes to win her on those material terms:

Madam, although I cannot Woove in Eloquent Orations, or Courtly Solicitations, or Learned Definitions, being only bred to Industrious actions, thrifty savings, gainful getings, to inrich me with worldly wealth, and not to studious Contemplations, Poetical Fictions, Divine Elevations, Philosophical Observations, State-Politicians, School-contradictions, Lawes Intrications, by which (perchance) I might have

gained Fame, but not Wealth: But Fame neither cloaths the naked, nor feeds the hungry, nor helps the distressed, neither doth it maintain a Wife in Bravery. (390)

The Citizen sets philosophical pursuits directly against money and material need, gained through "Industrious actions, thrifty savings, gainful getings." While he suggests that money engages the amelioration of the poor and needy, he also suggests its usefulness in non-necessary goods. As he continues, he shows the relationship between marriage and selling: a woman would enhance his business in the same way that he has just suggested his business would enhance his wife--by clothing her "bravely." He tells Lady Prudence,

if you will be mine, you shall sit in a shop all furnish'd with gold, and great summs shall be brought you for exchange of my Wares; and while you sit in my shop, all street-passengers will stand and gaze on your Beauty, and Customers will increase, and be prodigal to buy, whilst you sell, not for the use of what they buy, but for the delight to buy what you sell. (390)

He envisions her as another object in his shop; the image of her being brought money makes her the site of excess, as though she is an idol. At the same time, she profits only in terms of her appearance--she is given the money in exchange for her *husband's* goods ("my Wares ... my shop"). She will also, like an elaborate window display, cause the people in the street to gather and stare, and will lure them in to buy--not because of the goods inside, but "for the delight to buy what you sell." This passage reveals that the Citizen represents a particular mode of capitalism--his business strategy is to have customers buy unnecessary goods to his own profit (to then buy unnecessary goods to apparel his wife so that she lures expenditure from customers).

As the Citizen will suggest, this profit garnered by the wife also places

her as the marker of economic success for the husband: she enhances his store by her beauty, but she also carries that wealth as a marker because her clothing attires her "in Bravery." The Citizen tells Prudence that because of the success of the store with her as merchandise, she will be able to afford whatever she wants:

besides, of all saleable curiosities & varieties that are brought to the City, you shall have the first offer, and the first fruits and meats each Season doth produce, shall be served to your taste; your cloaths, though of the City-fashion, yet they shall rich and costly be; besides, to every Feast the City and each Citizen doth make, they will invite you, and place you as their chiefest guest; and when you by your Neighbours doors to pass, their Prentice-boys and Journey-men will leave their shop-boards, and run to view you as you go. Thus shall you live, if you will be mine, in Plenty, Luxury, Pride, and Ease. (390)

Her wealth will make her an object to be viewed because what she is able to afford will at once set her apart from others of her class (she will be the "chiefest guest"), but still firmly entrench her in her class (her clothing will be fine, "though of the City-fashion"). She will also serve as a model for those in lower classes because the "Prentice-boys and Journey-men" watch her, perhaps plotting social mobility (if they could have a wife like her, they would come up in the world, because of her role in enriching her husband's business). The Citizen shows her a vision of herself caught in the passive circularity of her would-be position as a catalyst for male wealth accumulation: she marks the profit and gains her social status through her appearance, and with her appearance, she garners that profit for her husband's business.

In her "prudent" answer, Lady Prudence shows that she recognizes the pitfalls of the Citizen's economic logic for an aristocratic woman. In her answer, she poses a different economic use of herself, a use that signals a consciousness of class relationships based in her difference from the Citizen.

She defeats his argument that her selling power is desirable by pointing out that it will mean the loss of her honesty; therefore, in the course of her argument, she equates wealth with inappropriate sexuality. She addresses him as "Rich Sir" in recognition of the way he defines himself:

I may sit in your shop, and draw Customers, but shall get no honour by them; I may sell your Wares, but lose my Reputation; I may be ador'd, worship'd, sought and pray'd to, as for and to a Mistris, but shall never be counted as a Saint; I may be rich in wealth, but poor of the Worlds good Opinion; I may be adorn'd with silver and gold, but blemish'd with censure and slander; I may feed on luxurious Plenty, yet my good name starve for want of a good Fame: for a Citizens Wife is seldome thought chaste, and the men for the most part accounted Cuckolds. I know not whether it be a Judgment from Heaven for their Cozening, or decreed by the Fates for their Covetousness, or bred by a natural Effect of their Luxury, which begets an Appetite to Wantonness; but from what cause soever it comes, so it is. (390-1)

While the Citizen desires an accumulation of profit, Prudence desires "honour"—a seemingly unmaterial attainment. Indeed, she juxtaposes specifically material goods with immaterial ones. Prudence's subsequent yoking of modes of production with sexuality seems curious at first, despite the common association of the citizen's wife with licentiousness. For Prudence, there is a direct correlation between public display, wealth, and uncontrollable lust. She even insists that citizens' wives' unchastity is a punishment—"a Judgment from Heaven"—for their husbands' unfair economic practices. With her reputation safely secured by her disavowal of his terms of courting, then, she asserts that she

will never be a Citizens Wife, though truly I do verily believe there are as many virtuous and chaste women, and understanding men that belong to the city, as in the Country; and were it not for the Citizens wealth, more Antient Families would be buried in poverty than there hath been, where many times a rich City-widow, or daughter, gives a dead Family a new Resurrection: wherefore, it is more prudent for men to marry into the City, than it is advantagious for women, especially such women that esteem a pure Reputation before wealth,

and had rather live in poverty, than be mistrusted for dishonesty. (391)

In her decision on his suit, Prudence illustrates that difference is indeed relational. The condition for difference is found, not in taxonomic disparity, but in commonalities that are anxiously differentiated by economically motivated signifiers--in this case, a linking of immorality and the accumulation of capital. Prudence is therefore able to use her chastity to establish a classed difference between herself and the Citizen. Prudence insists that, though there are good citizens with chaste wives, aristocratic women are better off not marrying citizens, even while it is desirable that wealthy merchant-class women marry up for the health of the aristocracy. Prudence distinguishes between men and women of different classes: she orders aristocratic women at the top of the list, perhaps even over aristocratic men who are allowed, in her explanation, to marry wealthy (and, by her logic, sexually promiscuous) merchant women. One effect of this play then is to organize an economic class hierarchy, with the merchant/citizen class falling below others (Prudence even esteems the Farmer who tries to woo her and blesses him as her "Honest Friend" [391]) precisely because of their money-grubbing. She defends herself with the "privacy" that would seem to distance her from the rudeness of being a merchant's wife, while the behavior she proposes for herself is itself a vision of class propriety, and is just as beneficial to her class's economic function. Aristocratic women represent class superiority through moral superiority, which is set against the materialism of the middle class. But this moral superiority is always conventionally rewarded through wealth. The only plays that truly end happily are those in which the characters' class status is intact or enhanced.<sup>41</sup>

As Prudence's privileging of "the Worlds good Opinion" foreshadows,

she does not choose the Citizen to be her husband. In fact, she chooses a Stranger who happens to be the next suitor after the Citizen. This stranger, to all appearances, is poor and disfigured: he is described as *"a man that had a wooden Leg, a patch on his Eye, and Crook-back'd, unhandsome snarled Hair, and plain poor Cloaths on "* (393). She chooses him, despite his lack of money, because he promises to love her, and recites a poetic speech about stars and souls mingling. He pleads for his honesty, not his rhetoric, and claims to woo her soul, not her body. The other characters in the play are horrified and disgusted by her choice, insisting endlessly that she has chosen far below her station. As it turns out, of course, the Stranger is a very handsome, very wealthy Prince, which Prudence only knows after she has actually married him. He takes off his disguise onstage, in the bridal bedroom, with the whole company present: *"the Bridegroom first pulls off his patch from his Eye, then pulls off his bumbast Doublet, and then his wooden Leg, and his snarled Periwig, having a fine head of hair of his own; then puts on his wastcoat, cap, slippers, and night-gown, he then appearing very handsome, the company staring upon him, the mean time they as in amazement"* (412). His transformation is required, but not until the commitment has been made. Two gentlemen, talking toward the end of the play, reveal the Prince's intent: *"for the better trial of her Virtue, he wooed her in his disguised, deformed shape, and unknown quality, lest his Dignity and VVealth might have inticed her Ambition, and not his Merit, to have won her Love, or his Person might have catch'd her Eye, but not his Love her heart"* (414). What provides a sense of comic closure is that the hero is eventually revealed in his true form, and he is always conventionally wealthy; comedies end with a restoration or reinforcement of goods. Money and status are only momentarily set aside as a requisite for marriage, but they

are integral to the happy ending. The appearance of money, title, and goods guarantees the conventional happiness of the match. She gains the money and status she refuses from the Citizen through the Prince, with the difference being a question of labor (she doesn't have to work as the Prince's wife) and status (as even Prudence makes clear, there is a difference between citizens and aristocracy). Her class status is naturalized because she can deny the importance of wealth in denying the Citizen, and yet gain it anyway by marrying a prince.

*The Publick Wooing* produces a version of economic class contingencies, which should underscore the difficulties of placing it in the private closet. Straznicky alludes to a possible way to disengage the spheres when she writes that "although these plays never appeared at any of the commercial theaters, they were anything but detached from the stage of public affairs" (357). "The stage of public affairs" is exactly the focus in my reading of the scene from *The Publick Wooing*. It is structured by an understanding of a merchant woman's public function as she sits in the shop and is gawked at, juxtaposed with Prudence's recognition of that *as* public display and her subsequent hierarchicalizing of "private" virtue over "public" wealth that makes the Citizen seem crassly fixated on money and the material goods that he uses his wife to obtain. But Prudence's seeming withdrawal into the private, or her assertion that she will not be a merchant's wife because she wants to protect her reputation is actually something else: it is a distinction required by those classes that depend on lineage (kinship) and require the passing of titles, property, and prestige to be proven publicly. Prudence functions as a member of a particular class in either possible marriage to the Citizen or the Prince. Her membership is signalled not only through her construction of the Citizen as the Other, but also by her ability to visualize her



own function in two different class schemas. Both reveal modes of production and consequent social relationships: the Citizen's class is one where success is measured through profit and luxury, achieved through the wife as a catalyst for economic growth. Her presence, and her attainment is the show of success; "Prentice-boys and Journey-men" imply a certain relationship below that of the Citizen, and the Citizen's invoking of them shows that he uses Prudence as an emblem of social mobility. She is therefore an advertisement for the particular formation that supports the Citizen's class. But of value to Prudence are sexual purity, honour, her reputation, and her invisibility. These appear to be outside of economic circulation, but of course they are not, for they imply and reinforce her own class identity as a member of the aristocracy that can only exhibit its privilege through the exercise of constructions of difference from other classes. In both economic schemas, Prudence functions outside of the actual modes of production, and is symbolic capital. Her choice of husband and her resultant class status does not remove her from material value.

### III. Homology of Function and Symbolic Capital

As I have begun to show thus far in this chapter, the study of (unperformed) drama by women as a public form (i.e. as "de-privatized") requires an alternate articulation of textual practice and situatedness. My reading of *Publick Wooing* posits one possible alternative, that of seeing the character as an expression of class difference and emergent class consciousness in the service of ideological closure. In the final section of this chapter, I will focus on some of the marxist theoretical issues that inform this alternate model of reading; in particular, Bourdieu's notion of symbolic capital informs much of

the content of succeeding chapters of this dissertation.

One inquiry posed by marxist literary criticism is that of the text's relationship to the culture that produces it. Within an orthodox (vulgar) base/superstructure model (in which the base [modes of production] determines the superstructure [cultural and educational institutions, for example]), the text reflects the social situation. Therefore, a text is an accurate mirror of, for example, the relationship between the classes occurring in the society. But the problem found by Eagleton and others with this model is that it can be expressed as "a passive, mechanistic relationship between literature and society, as though the work, like a mirror or photographic plate, merely inertly registered what was happening 'out there.'"<sup>42</sup>

A better expression of the relationship between levels is that of homology, or correspondence. To use a notion of homology is to note "correspondence in origin and development"<sup>43</sup> which entails, according to Williams, looking for "instances of formal or structural homology between a social order, its ideology, and its cultural forms" (106). Williams primarily notes that the most salient use of homology is in its forms. But "homology" is not an uncontested idea for marxists. Jameson, for example, notes that a dependence on homology as a model means that "the same essence is at work in the specific language of culture as in the organization of the relations of production" (39-40). He critiques it on the grounds that it "encourages the most comfortable solutions" (46) by creating similarities between everything and erasing specificities of history, class, language versus production, etc. Such similarities, asserts Raymond Williams, lose the effects of determinism or dominance (106-7) and do not address process (so that they appear to be static relationships or correspondences rather than dynamic ones). However, homology doesn't preclude relative autonomy, for example. Positing

structures and processes as relatively autonomous from the base is a means by which a determinism with the sense of “setting limits” can be theorized, and the vulgar marxist notion of determinism is avoided. Neither does homology have to be seen as separate from process. Nor does it presume that everything is the same, but that there is some sort of salient corresponding function or structure between levels, between representations, etc.

If the text is seen as itself formative of the cultural situation, then it can be posited as an active site that produces cultural and economic values rather than a static, reflective version of society. Therefore, a text has a corresponding function to other elements of society, and it corresponds to other forms within that society that have a similar ideological function. Bourdieu, searching for a solution to vulgar marxism’s postulation of society as “economic in the last instance,” writes that the problem with economism is that it invites misreadings of economic circulation and meanings: “In reducing the economy to its objective reality, economism annihilates the specificity located precisely in the socially maintained discrepancy between the misrecognized or, one might say, socially repressed, objective truth of economic activity, and the social representation of production and exchange.”<sup>44</sup> Bourdieu therefore introduces the notion of symbolic capital to rewrite the “‘sacred’ island ... left as a sanctuary for the priceless or worthless things [economic calculation] cannot assess” (178). Bourdieu’s solution to this objectification is central to my own strategy. He argues that theoretical understandings of economy must

extend economic calculation to *all* the goods, material and symbolic, without distinction, that present themselves as *rare* and worthy of being sought after in a particular social formation .... the only way in which such accountancy [of symbolic exchanges] can apprehend the undifferentiatedness of economic and symbolic capital is in the form

of their perfect interconvertibility. (178)

If capital in both economic and symbolic forms circulates in the same way, to the same end (accumulation of profit and adherence to the ideological), then the relationship between each of these sites is homologous in function.

In this study, I argue that there are homologies of function between various practices and identity positions that are at the same time actively gendered and (or perhaps irreducibly) economic sites: wives, whores, women writers, pastoral sport, money, jewels (virginity, wealth), chastity, cottagers and peasants, marriage, family name and title, reputation. Each of these sites is conventional in form and content, and ideological in relationship to their function within closure. Each functions as symbolic capital (even in the case of money, which, as in *Volpone* and *Marcellia*, is able to attract more money, and in that way serves as an emblem that accumulates capital). It is apparent, for example, that Prudence herself in the *Public Wooing* operates as symbolic capital in both the Citizen's economic model and in her own.

Williams' assertion that the notion of homology loses a sense of hegemonic dominance is an important reservation. Bourdieu offers a solution by theorizing that the homologous forms of circulating capital (symbolic and real) inescapably structure the operation of dominance. He writes, "In class societies, everything takes place as if the struggle for the power to impose the legitimate mode of thought and expression that is unceasingly waged in the field of the production of symbolic goods tended to conceal, not least from the eyes of those involved in it, the contribution it makes to the delimitation of the universe of discourse" (170).

Furthermore, dominance is expressed in the mystification that modes of circulation conceal (through objectification) in order to function. Bourdieu notes that "objectification guarantees the permanence and cumulativeness of

material and symbolic acquisitions which can then subsist without the agents having to recreate them continuously and in their entirety by deliberate action" (184). This system is a self-perpetuating one; when circulation is set in motion this way, modes of dominance (symbolic violence) are as well:

because the profits of these institutions are the object of differential appropriation, objectification also and inseparably ensures the reproduction of the structure of the distribution of the capital which, in its various forms, is the precondition for such appropriation, and in so doing, reproduces the structure of the relations of domination and dependence. (184)

Therefore, an understanding of the ways that exchange is objectified reveals the ways in which dominance operates. The focus of this study is just that: a study in how dominance operates through a consideration of the artifactual, circulating texts as themselves classed sites of dominance.

Thus, the homologies established between ... the different forms of capital and the corresponding modes of circulation, oblige us to abandon the dichotomy of the economic and the non-economic which stands in the way of seeing the science of economic practices as a particular case of a general science of the economy of practices, capable of treating all practices, including those purporting to be disinterested or gratuitous, and hence non-economic, as economic practices directed towards the maximizing of material or symbolic profit (183).

This type of homology, then, allows an interrogation of those "practices" that appear to be "disinterested or gratuitous," such as literary writing and generic conventions. This construction is directly relevant to *Publick Wooing*: Prudence tries to counter the Citizen's overt usage of her as an economic function for his business by claiming that his solicitation of her is crassly economic. She counters with a position for herself that is supposedly non-economic. But actually, she uses the expression of capitalist accumulation to describe her virtues as symbolic capital. Indeed, these possessions (honor, reputation, sexual purity) make her a good choice of wife, and the Stranger

rewards her symbolic capital by converting it into economic capital. Her chaste position as a wealthy wife of a Prince should not be considered a “disinterested or gratuitous” happy ending, but one that places Prudence advantageously and highlights her status as exchange object in modes of circulation.

However, rather than allow the text to remain merely a carrier of that sentiment, we must see that the conventionality of the ending actually constructs the relationship between the reader and the scene, rewarding the reader who accepts the generic contract as such that she sees the undesirability of the Citizen and sanctions Prudence’s marriage to the Prince that does occur at the end. Such a reader is rewarded with a class position equal to that of Prudence’s, because the reader is aligned with Prudence through an ability to correctly read classed conventions. Because the class status of the reader is at stake, it is possible to read for conventional stability; the play creates the reader as an object of exchange. Thus, the text effects an homology between those who are represented in it, and the readership it presumes (or constructs), an homology between modes of circulation, of symbolic and real goods, and an homology of function between the text and the economic society it represents.

The specific class privilege that interpellates the reader, then, is a particular mode of production. Bourdieu claims that “the specifically symbolic power to impose the principles of the construction of reality—in particular, social reality—is a major dimension of political power” (165), and must be seen as an ability to construct a version of dominance. These texts exactly construct a vision of reality by defining and representing (producing, even) the (lower class) Other and the place of the privileged group in economic relations. New historical class critique tends to exclude the

aristocratic class and their control over constructions of their own class privilege as well as the others below them.<sup>45</sup> Their power to represent allows a control of the (re)production of their own power, and also presumes and reproduces class privilege in their readers. As a social formation, then, class implies specifically economic relationships that are created through a process. Such a development might be traced through a discursive formation (like dramatic texts), which involves tracing the ways that texts do indeed create specific and overt visions of class difference and cohesion. The site of this creation is the female character and her homologous forms, the author function, and the reception of the text's generic closure by the reader.

If homology of function in the way I have outlined it, specific to the texts that I will read in this study, is a form of expressing what is dominant, then one further issue must be briefly taken up: the question of the model of containment (exertion of dominance) and subversion (resistance) which occupies new historicists positing a particular vision of textual/cultural operation. Rosemary Kegl's recent study of rhetorical containment "analyzes how struggles over gender and over class were mediated through the formal properties of English Renaissance writing" (2). Kegl focuses on "rhetorical gestures" in order to determine "what sorts of relationships to gender and to class these rhetorical gestures help to promote ... I analyze how these gestures conceal possible sites and forms of Renaissance collective politics" (2), since "each gesture [is] a process that participates in social struggle by promoting a particular experience of Renaissance material conditions in England" (3). More specifically, she writes that "those gestures attempt to make unimaginable any sort of collective struggle for social change, including one that might address the difference among women" (9).

Kegl's method implies that class-based rhetorical language tries to

control representations of women, making difficult their rhetorical (and material) resistance. In this way, she qualifies the dominant subversion/containment model introduced by Greenblatt. Insofar as subversion is coded as resistance, it can serve as an indication of agency. Indeed, scholars locate agency not in intentional action alone, but in action that subverts or resists a given power construction. Greenblatt's model is that "subversiveness that is genuine and radical ... is at the same time contained by the power it would appear to threaten. Indeed the subversiveness is the very product of that power and furthers its ends."<sup>46</sup> Of course, this model has its critics. Jean Howard, drawing on other scholars, insists that the subversion/containment model posits a too-monolithic notion of power.<sup>47</sup> And Jonathan Dollimore remarks that the idea of subversion must have specific criteria in order to be more than only potentially subversive: "not only does the idea have to be conveyed, it has also actually to be used to refuse authority or be seen by authority as capable and likely of being so used."<sup>48</sup> Writing about Williams' expression of dominance, Dollimore says that Williams was

resisting that naive radicalism of some cultural critics who, averting their eyes from the past, disavow the complexity and indirect effectiveness of cultural domination; who also refuse to recognise that struggles for a better world have been not only savagely repressed but also repudiated by those who once supported them, and ignored by those with most to gain from them.<sup>49</sup>

It has been a commonplace in criticism to suggest that the fact of women writing was itself subversive or resistant because it was in direct opposition to the list of strictures placed on them (silence, for example). But when the conventions of the text are complicit with dominant ideologies, then an assertion of the possibility of the texts' subversive function must be examined. As I hope to show in each chapter of this study, there are



conditions placed on women who write that ideally ensure that their works nevertheless conform to ideological expectations.

Rather than find instances of subversion or resistance, this study instead focuses on a group of texts that I will posit has no investment in subverting the status quo: Why would aristocratic women writing unperformed plays—an aristocratic genre—wish to resist the class, race, and gender structures that support them *as* writers? The ability to write comes from their class standing (both in terms of literacy and education, and in terms of respectability which must be upheld through what is written), and includes classed contingencies placed on their writing. Even when I turn in chapter five to plays written for the public stage by women not of the aristocracy, I argue that the modes of producing and circulating capital—both real and symbolic—are applicable to the conventions and ideological function of the texts. Therefore, consciously setting aside Neely's compelling charge that criticism on women's literature and history must not replicate the patriarchal version, I articulate an historicized, specific version of the particular status of women as symbolic capital in the structure of early capitalism.

## CHAPTER I NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> See Margaret P. Hannay, *Silent But for the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators, and Writers of Religious Works* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1985).
- <sup>2</sup> Marta Straznicky, "Reading the Stage: Margaret Cavendish and Commonwealth Closet Drama," *Criticism* 37 (1995), 355-390. Citation from 355.
- <sup>3</sup> Straznicky notes that "as Margaret Ezell has recently written, this bias in favor of market-oriented writing has been imposed anachronistically on the early modern period by feminist literary historians who work primarily on nineteenth-century novelists and whose chief analytical category is evolutionary progress" ("Reading the Stage," 356).
- <sup>4</sup> Reading activities include a woman reading aloud to a sewing group, or an evening spent reading aloud different roles from a manuscript or printed play. See Louise Schleiner, *Tudor and Stuart Women Writers* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994); Margaret J.M. Ezell, *Writing Women's Literary History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 53-7.
- <sup>5</sup> Margaret J.M. Ezell, "To Be Your Daughter in Your Pen': The Social Function of Literature in the Writings of Lady Elizabeth Brackley and Lady Jane Cavendish," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 51 (1988), 281-96. Citation from 294.
- <sup>6</sup> Straznicky, "Reading the Stage," 356.
- <sup>7</sup> Ezell, "To Be Your Daughter in Your Pen," 284.
- <sup>8</sup> Jonas Barish, "The Problem of Closet Drama in the Italian Renaissance," *Italica* 71 (1994), 4-30. Citation from 4.
- <sup>9</sup> Marta Straznicky, "Recent Studies in Closet Drama," *English Literary Renaissance* 28 (1998), 142-160. Citation from 142; Straznicky cites W. W. Greg's *A Bibliography of the English Printed Drama to the Restoration*.
- <sup>10</sup> Straznicky, "Recent Studies in Closet Drama," 142.
- <sup>11</sup> The edition of Garnier's eight plays had been published in France in 1585. Alexander Maclaren Witherspoon, *The Influence of Robert Garnier on Elizabethan Drama* (1924; reprint, London: Archon Books, 1968), 24. Witherspoon concludes that Garnier's plays "were intended primarily, if not exclusively, as closet-drama" (18), as there is little or no evidence of their performance.
- <sup>12</sup> Barish's example is from an 1821 playbill for Byron's drama, *Marino Faliero*: "Those who have perused "MARINO FALIERO," will have anticipated the necessity of considerable curtailments, aware that conversations or soliloquies, however beautiful and interesting in the closet, frequently tire in public recital." Barish, 28, n1.
- <sup>13</sup> Stephanie H. Jed, *Chaste Thinking: The Rape of Lucretia and the Birth of Humanism* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1989); Alan Stewart, "The Early Modern Closet Discovered," *Representations* 50 (1995), 76-100; Lisa Jardine, *Reading Shakespeare Historically* (London: Routledge, 1996). At stake with these three critics is the question of if and when women had access to the "repository" of the masculine closet. See also Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), and David Starkey, "Intimacy and Innovation: The Rise of the Privy Chamber, 1485-1547," in *The English Court: From the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War*, edited by David Starkey (London: Longman, 1987).
- <sup>14</sup> Lena Cowen Orlin, "Gertrude's Closet," *Shakespeare Jahrbuch* (1998), 44-67. Citation from 46.
- <sup>15</sup> "TO HIS GRACE THE Duke of Newcastle," in THE LIFE OF THE Thrice Noble, High and Puissant PRINCE William Cavendish ... WRITTEN By the thrice Noble, Illustrious, and Excellent Princess, MARGARET, Duchess of Newcastle, His Wife. (London: 1667), b1r-v. I am grateful to Margaret Ezell for her help in locating this passage.

<sup>16</sup> Straznicky, "Reading the Stage," 372.

<sup>17</sup> Jeffrey Masten, *Textual Intercourse: Collaboration, Authorship, and Sexualities in Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 15-16.

<sup>18</sup> See also Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulations of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), 3.

<sup>19</sup> S. P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies, eds., *Renaissance Drama by Women: Texts and Documents* (New York and London: Routledge, 1996), 50.

<sup>20</sup> For women's participation in other professional aspects of the theater, see the collection of documents pertaining to women's association with the theater in part 2 of Cerasano and Wynne-Davies. See also Jean E. Howard, "Women as Spectators, Spectacles, and Paying Customers," in *Staging the Renaissance: Reinterpretations of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama*, edited by David Scott Kastan and Peter Stallybrass. (London: Routledge, 1991), 68-74; Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, second edition (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996), 56-60.

<sup>21</sup> Jean E. Howard, *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 4.

<sup>22</sup> See Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," *Social Text* 8 (1990), 56-80; and Linda Nicholson, "Feminism and Marx: Integrating Kinship with the Economic" in *Feminism as Critique*, edited by Seyla Benhabib and Drucilla Cornell (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 16-30.

<sup>23</sup> See for example, Seyla Benhabib and Drucilla Cornell, "Introduction: Beyond the Politics of Gender" in *Feminism as Critique*, edited by Seyla Benhabib and Drucilla Cornell (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 1-15. The editors are concerned with the inadequacy of "the paradigm of production" for understanding women's work.

<sup>24</sup> Maureen Quilligan, "Freedom, Service, and the Trade in Slaves: The Problem of Labor in *Paradise Lost*," in *Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture*, edited by Margreta de Grazia, Maureen Quilligan, and Peter Stallybrass (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 213-34. Citation from 226.

<sup>25</sup> Susan M. Reverby and Dorothy O. Helly, "Introduction: Converging on History" in *Gendered Domains: Rethinking Public and Private in Women's History* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992), 1-24. Citation from 6.

<sup>26</sup> Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex," in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, edited by Rayna R. Reiter (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 157-210. Citation from 209-10.

<sup>27</sup> Judith Butler, "Merely Cultural," *New Left Review* 227 (1998), 33-44. Citation from 40. Butler writes that the notion of an identity, for example, being "merely cultural" is specious because the "cultural" and the "economic" are contingencies; see especially her discussion of Rubin, 38-43.

<sup>28</sup> Louis A. Montrose, "Spenser's Domestic Domain: Poetry, Property and the Early Modern Subject," in *Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture*, edited by Margreta de Grazia, Maureen Quilligan, and Peter Stallybrass (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 83-130. Citation from 95-6.

<sup>29</sup> See also Susan Dwyer Amussen, *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988). Amussen incisively argues that "the analogy [between the kingdom and the family] means that it is inappropriate to dismiss what happened in the family as 'private'; the dichotomy so familiar to us today between private and public is necessarily false when applied to the experience of early modern England" (2). I would note however, that her statement seems to imply that the separate spheres do have salience in other time periods.

<sup>30</sup> Rayna Rapp, Ellen Ross, and Renate Bridenthal, "Examining Family History," in *Sex and Class in Women's History*, edited by Judith L. Newton, Mary P. Ryan, and Judith R. Walkowitz (London and New York: Routledge, 1983), 232-57. Citation from 232. Each author was responsible for a different section of the essay.

- <sup>31</sup> Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1981), 106.
- <sup>32</sup> Margaret Cavendish, Marchioness (later Duchess) of Newcastle, *Playes Written by the Thrice NOBLE, ILLUSTRIOUS AND Excellent Princess, THE LADY MARCHIONESS OF NEWCASTLE*. (London, 1662), 372. "Publick" is the spelling on the title page, even though each running header spells the play "Publique Wooing." For textual information, see my "Note on the Texts" after the Introduction.
- <sup>33</sup> Elaine Hobby, *Virtue of Necessity: English Women's Writing, 1649-88* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988), 110.
- <sup>34</sup> Straznicky, "Reading the Stage," 375.
- <sup>35</sup> Sophie Tomlinson, "My Brain the Stage': Margaret Cavendish and the Fantasy of Female Performance," in *Women, Texts and Histories, 1575-1760*, edited by Clare Brant and Diane Purkiss (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 134-63. Citation from 145.
- <sup>36</sup> Tomlinson, 150. See also Sara Heller Mendelson, *The Mental World of Stuart Women: Three Studies* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), 45; Linda R. Payne, "Dramatic Dreamscape: Women's Dreams and Utopian Vision in the Works of Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle," in *Curtain Calls: British and American Women and the Theater, 1660-1820*, edited by Mary Anne Schofield and Cecilia Macheski (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1991), 18-33; Kathleen Jones, *A Glorious Fame: The Life of Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, 1623-1673* (London: Bloomsbury Press, 1988).
- <sup>37</sup> Susan Wiseman, "Gender and Status in Dramatic Discourse: Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle" in *Women, Writing, History 1640-1740*, edited by Isobel Grundy and Susan Wiseman (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992), 159-77. Citation from 167.
- <sup>38</sup> Wiseman and Tomlinson both praise Lady Sanspareille, but do not mention her death.
- <sup>39</sup> Prudence's image of herself as a vessel resonates with the Petrarchan ship topos. Her assertion of herself as a weak vessel evokes 1 Peter 3:7—an unambiguous biblical passage outlining the inferior place of women in marriage.
- <sup>40</sup> According to the OED, "citizen" is commonly glossed as a "city dweller," though the OED is also clear that there are class implications with this term during the Renaissance: a "citizen" is distinguished from a soldier, and also from the gentry or nobility (def. 1.d.). The citizen can be "a burgess or a freeman of a city" (def. 1.a.) suggesting that he is also not aligned with wage workers or poor laborers (the "unfree").
- <sup>41</sup> I take my cue here from Elin Diamond, "Gestus and Signature in Aphra Behn's *The Rover*," *ELH* 56 (1989), 519-41. Diamond writes that "In Restoration comedy no witty unmarried woman was really witty unless she had property *and* a maidenhead" (527). Diamond reveals the constructedness of the supposedly free nature of the speaking, witty woman. She can be so only when her class status as exchangeable property is ensured. The ending of plays are therefore dependent on that constructedness.
- <sup>42</sup> Terry Eagleton, *Marxism and Literary Criticism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 49.
- <sup>43</sup> Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 105.
- <sup>44</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 172.

<sup>45</sup> When work in new historical literary studies addresses class, it often does so usefully by analyzing public measures of social mobility. The idea of “mobility” is generally shorthand for middle class encroachment on the upper classes through acquisitions and “new money.” These studies have made important contributions to an understanding of the operations of class in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England. The general notion of social mobility, however, makes class synonymous with only those classes that can move up, rather than a consideration of the way that class privilege is (discursively) held in place, or threatened with a fall. See David Scott Kastan’s “Workshop and/as Playhouse (*The Shoemaker’s Holiday*)” and Frank Whigham’s “Incest and Ideology (*The Duchess of Malfi*).” Both essays appear in *Staging the Renaissance: Reinterpretations of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama*, edited by David Scott Kastan and Peter Stallybrass (New York: Routledge, 1991), 151- 63, and 263-74, respectively; Rosemary Kegl, *The Rhetoric of Containment: Figuring Gender and Class in Renaissance Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); Frank Whigham, *Ambition and Privilege: The Social Tropes of Elizabethan Courtesy Theory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Mary Beth Rose, *The Expense of Spirit: Love and Sexuality in English Renaissance Drama* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988, especially chapter 2: “Sexual Disguise and Social Mobility in Jacobean City Comedy;” Peter Stallybrass, “Patriarchal Territories: The Body Enclosed,” in *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Margaret W. Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy J. Vickers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 123-42, especially 134-42.

<sup>46</sup> Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations*, 30.

<sup>47</sup> Howard, *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England*, 9-12.

<sup>48</sup> Jonathan Dollimore, “Introduction: Shakespeare, Cultural Materialism and the New Historicism,” in *Political Shakespeare: Essays in Cultural Materialism*, second edition, edited by Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995), 2-17. Citation from 13.

<sup>49</sup> Jonathan Dollimore, “Shakespeare Understudies: the Sodomite, the Prostitute, the Transvestite and Their Critics,” in *Political Shakespeare: Essays in Cultural Materialism*, second edition, edited by Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995), 129-52. Citation from 130.

## CHAPTER II

WORTHY SPACES: THE LABOR OF PRIVILEGE  
(*LOVES VICTORY* )

This chapter's reading of Lady Mary Wroth's *Loves Victory* (c. 1624), a pastoral drama, interrogates an ideologically strategic dichotomy between labor and leisure. Pastoral conventionally presents leisured shepherds who engage in sports of love--singing contests, for example--in order to lament a lost love or win a current one. Such shepherds therefore signify ease and otium in the pursuit of unalienated personal fulfillment. Their sports become their form of labor, and the worth of their songs becomes a form of currency--capital--to "buy" what they want: the lover. Pastoral uses literary achievement (both the characters' and the author's) to define social value by using agrarian labor as an empty signifier to be filled and replaced by sport. In this case, worth or value stands as the precise opposite of labor and indicates leisure. Labor and leisure become the properties of different classes--those who work, and those who do not have to work, and yet have time and skill to represent those who do work.

The result of this particular ideological function of labor and leisure is that in the course of *Loves Victory* a hierarchy is created based in the recognition and use of language as symbolic capital. Because this use of language "buys" love, a sympathetic reading of the convention of marriage in this play positions the reader in alignment with the main female character, Musella, on the side of privilege and against Rustick and rusticity. As I noted

in chapter one, literary criticism of texts by women often depends for its analysis on the difference between private and public spheres as a gendered difference (private-female, public-male). In doing so, it tends to enact and fix that difference. This means that romance and marriage are often seen as part of the private sphere, with the consequence being a loss of marriage's usefulness in class exchanges between men. Also lost, then, is the sense in which women's texts participate in social contexts such as class hierarchy. In the same way, because of its central convention of the contrast between the city or court and the countryside, the literary mode of pastoral slips easily into the dichotomy of public life and private withdrawal.

### I. Pastoral Labor

There are two extremes of criticism on pastoral (with a spectrum of responses between). At one end is a privatized response invested in pastoral as art that forms "a realm in itself, an absolute realm, detached from all that is not art and literature."<sup>1</sup> This view constructs the pastoral world as privileging an "inner" (private) retreat that exists in order to be sheerly antithetical to anything political or public. In addition to Bruno Snell's work on pastoral, works from Renato Poggioli's *The Oaten Flute: Essays on Pastoral Poetry and the Pastoral Ideal* (1975), to Sukanta Chaudhuri's recent traditional critical history, *Renaissance Pastoral and its English Developments* contribute to a traditional analysis of pastoral's aesthetics. In these studies, pastoral appears as an "'anti-heroic' world that privileges 'personal relationships' and a human bond with nature."<sup>2</sup> For example, Susan Snyder's recent book on pastoral, *Pastoral Process: Spenser, Marvell, Milton* (1998) uses psychoanalytic understandings of early childhood development to

contextualize individuated psychic nostalgia for prelapsarian culture. The romantic impulse to locate the individual within an innocuous “natural” realm informs the methodology of this end of the spectrum. Paul Alpers’ *What is Pastoral?* suggests that criticism should be taking pastoral texts “on their own terms” rather than “questioning their grounds and exposing what they repress or occlude” and running the risk of “demystifying, not to say trashing”<sup>3</sup> the texts they consider. This fear of interrogating pastoral constructions suggests a sacred integrity of the text and the impossibility that a text could hold or even construct the potentially negative values of a culture.

The other end of the spectrum tries to “demystify” the social relations of pastoral as politicized and it shows that it operates within a set of culturally determined meanings. Annabel Patterson, in her study of Virgil, notes that “pastoral referred to something other than itself, and specifically to the historical circumstances in which it was produced.”<sup>4</sup> She acknowledges *Ecloques* scholars such as Snell, Alpers, Friedrich Klingner, Eleanor Winsor Leach, Brooks Otis, Michael Putnam, and Charles Segal,<sup>5</sup> critics whose responses to Virgil she historicizes. Rather than a definition of the mode of pastoral, she offers to treat “what pastoral ... can do and has always done; or rather, to put the agency back where it belongs—how writers, artists, and intellectuals of all persuasions have *used* pastoral for a range of functions and intentions” (7). In particular, Louis Adrian Montrose’s work on pastoral, which I will mention further in this section, revises notions of the cultural function of pastoral. Other critics have explored the particularities of the historical situatedness that characterizes pastoral texts. For example, Jane Tylus’ “Jacobean Poetry and Lyric Disappointment” and Rosemary Kegl’s “‘Joyning my Labour to my Pain’: the Politics of Labor in Marvell’s Mower Poems” address in different ways the cultural conditions that make pastoral a



contextualized and public literary form.<sup>6</sup> Work on pastoral court masques and country entertainments such as Stephen Orgel's "Sidney's Experiment in Pastoral: *The Lady of May*" (in *The Jonsonian Masque*, 1965) reflects an understanding of the use of pastoral to express power relationships. At this end of the spectrum, the values and construction of the private world are contingent on a construction of the public realm.

In this chapter, my analysis of *Loves Victory* will take its primary cue from the "public" end of the spectrum I outlined above, and from the work of Louis Montrose in particular. In the pastoral world of *Loves Victory*, pastoral harmony is guaranteed by the conventional romantic resolution of marriage for the main characters. The meaning and importance of this particular convention is underwritten by a social hierarchy determined by the characters' leisured activities. In the play, the characters are differentiated from one another by skill in sport. Sport becomes a signifying practice: a certain level of skill corresponds to a certain class position, and a certain class position guarantees a certain level of skill. The sports the characters engage in are always sports of language. A correct use of language (which the play defines) serves as symbolic capital, as does its content. The "correct" expression of love (the one valorized by the characters) as unmaterialistic and unconcerned with real capital reinforces the way that marriage is at base an ideological expression. The conventionality of the closure of the play mystifies that ideology. The use of language is the labor the play represents, and the labor that the characters value.<sup>7</sup> The definition of skill in sport comes through the distinct othering of the character of Rustick. Though he tries to participate in the other characters' literary activities, he fails at them. His failure invites the other characters' scorn, even more urgently when his "unworthy" desire to marry Musella impinges on her class standing in act 5.

Because the play privileges literary creation through sport, the writing of the play itself is strategically homologous to the classed literary creation in the play and in turn defines notions of literary worth and female authorship.

In *Loves Victory*, as in other pastoral dramas, the possibility of labor appears only between the acts, with the action of the play made up of sport, wooing, and singing—pointedly not the activities that make up agrarian labor.<sup>8</sup> The last lines in act 1 of *Loves Victory* find the shepherds realizing, after an act's worth of musing and singing songs,<sup>9</sup> that they must go back to work, even as they look forward to their sports again. These lines contrast desire (“lov’s quickest fire”) with labor:

Mu[sella]:  
 ... ’tis time wee doe returne  
 to tend owr flocks who all this while doe burne ...  
 Da[lina]:  
 I ame content, and now lett’s all retire,  
 Phi[lisses]:  
 And soone returne sent by lov’s quickest fire. (1.377-383)

When Dalina insists they return to work, she calls for them to “retire”—a verb that connotes rest, not work. Her call is echoed in Philisses’ appropriation of Musella’s metaphor of burning to refer, not to the responsibilities of work, but to love. Philisses “burns” with love while their flocks “burn” as they stand in the sun. The suggestion is that the shepherds have been in respite from the sun (and from labor) “all this while.”

While love is an alternative to work, one representable through sport, labor is not, as Dalina’s words opening act 2 will show. When they reconvene, Dalina asserts that the shepherds have been too quiet, since they have been tending their sheep, and she calls for sport rather than work. As the shepherds and shepherdesses gather, she says,

Mee thinks wee now to silent ar, lett's play  
att something while wee yett haue pleasing day. (2.1-2)

Dalina delineates the problem with representing work: work is "to silent," solitary, categorically undramatic. Therefore, since play is not undramatic, play becomes the object of the drama. The space, therefore, in which the characters could actually "work" happens in the non-space between acts, where the only significant time passed is in the imagination of the viewer or reader; there isn't any space between the assertion that work must be done and the point at which the shepherds come back to "play." Thus, work is juxtaposed and representationally replaced with sport.

Montrose aptly demystifies this idealized blank space of work in his essays on Elizabethan pastoral: "the creation of a figurative pastoral discourse involves a distortion, a selective exclusion, of the material pastoral world."<sup>10</sup> The exclusion of labor, for example, results in the mystification of the social realities of agrarian work, an exclusion which offers the characters as an opportunity for aristocratic identification. Montrose suggests that in works such as Spenser's *The Shepheardes Calendar* and Puttenham's *Arte of English Poesie*, "the aristocratic and courtly culture of the Renaissance cleanses the taint of agrarian labor from pastoral imagery, thus making possible a metaphorical identification between otiose shepherds and leisured gentlemen."<sup>11</sup> It is only because of that cleansing that the identification of the agrarian worker, disguised as a poet (or vice-versa) has its meaning. Montrose concludes, importantly, that "the actual powerlessness and compulsory physical labor of the peasant are transformed into a paradoxical experience of power, freedom and ease" (155). As readers read and identify with the shepherd, they take on that "power, freedom and ease." Pastorals appear to be about a particular class of (poor) land workers, but they serve to

signify an “idealized lowly life in a world of unalienated labor”<sup>12</sup> that doesn’t match up with a material reality for agricultural wage earners.<sup>13</sup>

Perhaps motivating such new historical accounts of pastoral is the importance of the notion of power that constructs the political nature of the genre. The latency of labor relations, Richard Halpern suggests, is a feature of capitalism, because “capital replaces the visible or patent form of sovereign political power with an invisible and resolutely *latent* form of economic domination.”<sup>14</sup> To suggest that pastoral is a capitalist mode would be inaccurate, since pastoral has flourished outside of the early capitalist historical time I consider in this study. However, under capitalism, pastoral acquires new resonance as a means of representing new conditions of labor.<sup>15</sup> One of the most important effects of those conditions is the ability of those who buy the labor to represent the laborer. Halpern explains that under capitalism, labor is no longer a forced relation in the same way as under feudalism:

No direct compulsion, force, or hierarchic obligation—in short, no sovereignty—clouds the social transparency of the labor contract .... Labor power, it turns out, is unique among commodities because its ‘consumption’ by the purchaser produces more value than it cost him; but in consuming this commodity he acts as all other purchasers do, and he has paid for it as fully. Thus the moment of ‘power’ or coercion remains fugitive or latent even when we step into the factory or site of production .... Capital replaces the visible or patent form of sovereign political power with an invisible and resolutely *latent* form of economic domination. (4-5)

As he amends notions of visible power, Halpern defines power as also “fugitive,” “latent,” and “invisible,” which means that labor oppression becomes hegemonic rather than held in place by sheer force. This construction of power allows Halpern to analyze rhetoric and copia, for example, as invisible, powerful means by which class relations are

implemented. The invisibility of the economic power that requires alienated labor therefore structures capitalist economic relations.

The function of early capitalist pastoral is to idealize a vision of an harmonious world which depends on a strategic elision of the hard aspects of work in favor of a leisured vision of sport and play. Citing William Empson, John Bernard points out that “pastoral [is] a social process that seeks to reconcile collective and individual conflicts by implying ‘a beautiful relation between rich and poor.’”<sup>16</sup> In fact, Montrose refers to the pastoral world as “a paeon to ‘order.’”<sup>17</sup> The representation of laborers as happy, well-adjusted, and unoppressed by the material difficulty of the work they do can function to appease the consciousness of the classes who benefit from their labor. And those representing the worker in this way are the classes who do not have to labor. Pastoral is an efficient mode of class expression that depends for its cultural meaning on a idealization—a “cleansing” in Montrose’s words—of land-workers as a distorted mirror for the leisured classes. In *Loves Victory*, through the consistent elision or idealization of work, a leisured vision of harmonious social interaction is mobilized.

If pastoral doesn’t show *labor* per se, what it does show is the author’s own participation in specifically leisure activities that beneficially coincide with a sense of new standards for behavior.<sup>18</sup> As Montrose outlines the status of leisured behavior in his work on patronage between Elizabeth and her courtiers (Spenser in particular), he claims that Elizabethan pastoral is always deployed as a statement of power relations. Montrose claims that “the symbolic mediation of social relationships was a central function of Elizabethan pastoral forms; and that social relationships are, intrinsically, relationships of power” (153). Montrose sees pastoral as an expression of a very particular relationship: “royal pastoral was developed into a remarkably

flexible cultural instrument for the mediation of power relations between Queen and subjects" (166). Therefore, the success of pastoral to express power relationships during Elizabeth's reign "must be attributed in large part to the fact of the monarch's sex and to the extraordinary skill with which she and her courtier-poets turned that potential liability to advantage" (180).

Yet Montrose's arguments, because they are in part focused around questions of Elizabethan patronage between a female monarch and a male courtier, are historically contingent in a way that might not apply to a Jacobean pastoral such as *Loves Victory*. The pastoral vision of the play still enacts a "symbolic mediation of social relationships," though not as specific as those Montrose works with (Elizabeth/Spenser), but more generally about class (aristocracy/non-aristocratic). Margaret Anne McLaren has noted that the political situation would have been different during the time that Wroth was writing her pastoral (c. 1624):<sup>19</sup>

The changing idea of the lady at the Jacobean court contrasts sharply with that obtaining in Elizabethan times .... the political overview of the world evident in a Jonson or a Shakespeare is less central to the world of a Lady Wroth who inhabited a milieu only too ready to berate her as a woman meddling in matters beyond her sphere.<sup>20</sup>

McLaren begins to gesture toward an increasing saliency of separate spheres: without a woman on the throne, it might be easier to exclude women in general from public affairs. But despite the historical specificity that would seem to suggest a limited hypothesis for the way that pastoral functions, (either Elizabethan or "private" Jacobean) Montrose points out the larger complex of ideas that make pastoral an important generic expression: "Within the analogical system of thought that sanctioned social hierarchy, pastoral mystifications of relations between the humble and the mighty, the young and the old, were reinforced by examples of benevolent relationships

between superiors and inferiors that were literally pastoral (the shepherd and his flock)" (164). This "system of thought that sanctioned social hierarchy" is therefore unambiguously public since it resonates in and creates a version of social hierarchy. Therefore, *Loves Victory* nevertheless uses pastoral advantageously—not to express a particular relationship between a female author and the king, but to underscore the significance of the social hierarchy that supports the status quo and holds in place the social realities of agrarian labor but also depends on their mystification.

But the scholarship on *Loves Victory* has often read the play biographically, trying to create a master key of which character refers to which person whom Wroth knew.<sup>21</sup> This impetus establishes the play as a specific allegory—a *roman à clef*—of Wroth's life. Criticism has also imposed limits on the play by self-consciously privatizing the interpretive scope of meanings for the play, as do the following assumptions of McLaren's article:

Jacobean masque constructed an ideal Platonic realm intended to embody the political claims promulgated by the Stuart monarchy. Lady Wroth's characters, on the other hand, are more likely to reflect homely realities than political concerns. Her themes are highly personal and her work less open to allegorical interpretation than much of the prose and poetry of her male contemporaries. "*Loves Victorie*" resembles her other works in picturing not an exterior, outward world, but an interior, inward realm that begins and ends with the experience of human ... love. (281)

The homely, interior, and personal replaces the political exterior world. But Carolyn Ruth Swift's essay "*Feminine Self-Definition in Lady Mary Wroth's Loves Victorie* (c. 1621)" asserts a larger point about the positive portrayal of femininity in the play. Even though it reads Philisses and Musella's love as a careful analogy for Philip Sidney and Penelope Rich's railroaded romance, Swift writes: "Wroth ... gives her female characters a high degree of autonomy"<sup>22</sup> which results in "a vision of women who strengthen one

another and thus create love's victory" (172). Josephine A. Roberts asserts an even stronger effect for the play: "Wroth explores how women can exercise the power of choice despite the constraints of society."<sup>23</sup> These articles argue for the efficacy of the female community created within the play. Barbara Lewalski's study of *Loves Victory* also champions the play's representation of women, asserting with Swift and Roberts that the play "emphasizes female agency."<sup>24</sup> She reads Venus as the "dominant presence" in the plot of the play, and she asserts that "it is chiefly the women who act to resolve problems and to foster friendships and community" (97). Another vestige of agency is that Musella determines the solution to her unwanted betrothal. Lewalski writes that problem solving requires agency indicated by a specific action. Female characters often purposefully initiate the action in the play (100). For Lewalski, female friendships are also a sign of agency. She points out that the women in the play are better friends among themselves than the male characters are to each other, and the women use that female friendship to ease each other's suffering (98-99). Therefore, Lewalski importantly concludes that "this female agency is pervasive and positive, not diluted by gestures of containment or critique, a clear challenge to both generic and cultural norms" (105).

Lewalski claims that the community fostered by female agency is "an extended egalitarian community, without gender or class hierarchy .... a tight-knit non-hierarchical community" (95, 99; see also 89 and 105 where the same claim of non-hierarchalism is made). Lewalski asserts that the play gives the female characters a sense of agency that they do not have in their material world: "Wroth's drama encodes an implicit feminist politics emphasizing the values of female agency, egalitarianism, female friendship, and community, a politics which subverts both the norms of the genre and of



Jacobean society" (89). Lewalski's analysis of the way the play champions women and their relationships to each other at the expense of a *gender* hierarchy is integral to an understanding of the play. But Lewalski reaches her conclusion about gender and power at the expense of reading class relationships implicit in the play's representations of work. These relationships, as I will show, are highly developed in this play. This chapter argues that such an idealization of community occurs at the expense of Rustick. His juxtaposition with Musella allows the play to articulate a dynamic that defines symbolic, economic, and social worth. Rustick, as a test case for the saliency of this worth, is purposefully placed at the very bottom of the play's social hierarchy. Therefore, this pastoral world isn't actually as harmonious as it appears to be. Or rather, if the play appears to have a non-hierarchical ending, it is because of a mystified privileging of the ideal and leisured which is necessary to the generic closure of the play.

## II. Language and the Shepherd

The relationship in *Loves Victory* that most clearly constructs the social hierarchy of the play is the love triangle between Musella, her true lover Phillesses, and the shepherd Rustick, whose love for Musella is unrequited. As *Loves Victory* progresses, it becomes obvious that Rustick is not of the same ilk as the riddling, articulate shepherds and shepherdesses. While through sport, the others shed their already-nominal agrarian working-class identifications, Rustick's social identity becomes increasingly reflective of his name. In fact, his name bespeaks his problem: he *is* rustic (stressed by, and reduced to, his name<sup>25</sup>). His inabilities in sport are increasingly coded as evidence of class inferiority. Rustick serves as a foil for the rest of the

characters, all of whom are well-heel'd in the arts of singing songs, riddling, and generally playing along with the chosen sports. Rustick can perform none of the sports well, and is increasingly made fun of by the other characters, culminating in his exclusion from them in act 4. This exclusion happens through the measurement of accomplished literary sport (composing poems) and the use of sport to determine social standing.

The values of the community depend on an overwriting of labor with leisure: their leisure becomes their form of labor. Therefore, they eschew work, and the content of their songs and poems contain various signs of leisure, including passivity. For example, the sport of act 1 is a singing contest with Musella and Philisses as judges. Rustick jumps at the chance to participate in this sport (he is the first to sing after Climena initiates the sport). Yet, his song, while not openly ridiculed, is understood by the audience (the characters as well as readers of the play), and especially by Musella, as inappropriate. His lines, which border on doggerel, exclusively use agricultural metaphors in demeaning (though trying to praise) Musella:

When I doe see  
 thee, whitest thee  
 yea whiter then lambs wull  
 how doe I ioy  
 that thee inioye  
 I shall w<sup>t</sup> my hart full

Thy Eyes, doe play  
 like Goats w<sup>t</sup> hay  
 and skip like kids flying  
 from the sly fox  
 soe eyelids box  
 shutts up thy sights priing

Thy cheecks are red  
 like Okar spred  
 on a fatted sheeps back  
 thy paps ar found

like aples round  
noe praises shall lack. (I.335-352)<sup>28</sup>

Musella quickly ends his song at this point with “Well you haue praises given enough,” (1.353), even though Rustick’s reply makes it clear that she has interrupted him:

I had much more to say butt thus I me<sup>z</sup> mett,  
and stayd. (I.355-6)

It appears that the song is an embarrassment to Musella since she abruptly interrupts him, perhaps in part because it catalogues her body parts and associates them with the land. She becomes a space to cultivate, an object to be constructed through a gaze. Rustick voyeuristically appropriates her body: in the beginning of his song, he represents himself watching her and thinking about how he will enjoy her. But she is unable to look back at him: in stanza two, her eyes, which dart about, are kept from looking: her eyelids “shutts up thy sights priing.” The effect of his poem, though, casts disparagement, not on Musella, but on Rustick for being unable to carve a good poem out of stock conventions. This inability shows his lack of good breeding, including a lack of literacy. In fact, Swift argues that the male characters in the play “confirm their rusticity or insensitivity by making insulting comparisons of women with animals” (178). However, Lewalski points out that there is a difference between Rustick and Philisses in the poems and songs they make which “reflects Rustick’s lowness of mind in his low diction, and the power of Philisses’ passion in his high rhetoric” (102).

Rustick’s blazon can be contrasted with lines that Philisses speaks about Musella in act 2. He praises her as Rustick does, with natural images (as was a stock Petrarchan convention—the lily white lady with roses in her cheek), but his verse is not tied to the basely agricultural like Rustick’s farmyard

analogies. When Rustick asks Philisses who he loves, Philisses answers with a blazon of his own:

she who best thoughts must to affection moue  
 if any loue, non need ask who itt is.  
 w<sup>th</sup> in thes plaines non loves that loves nott this  
 delight of sheapheards pride of this faire place  
 noe beauty is that shines nott in her face  
 whose whitnes whitest lillies doth excell  
 matchd w<sup>th</sup> a rosie morning to compell  
 all harts to serue her yett doth she affect  
 butt only vertu, nor will quite neglect  
 those who doe serue her in an honest fashion  
 w<sup>ch</sup> sure doth more increase then decrease passion. (2.118-128)

While Rustick's gaze constructs her body, Philisses uses idealized metaphors to express his love for Musella and her perfection--her intangible virtue is more important than her beauty (though these are explicitly linked). He doesn't make it obvious who he sings to, thereby obscuring her identity further. Even while he notices her beauty and her whiteness, he doesn't associate her with animals as does Rustick. Her whiteness, for example, is associated with that which points to leisure (ornamental lilies) rather than with work of the land.

Indeed, the difference between the two blazons is that Rustick's appeals to agricultural work, while Philisses' uses natural images that do not depend on labor for their meaning. Rustick's images refer to the work that someone must perform (spreading ochre on the back of a sheep), or refer to work that has been done (he refers to the goats playing with hay), or work that will have to be done (keeping the goats from the fox, harvesting apples). Philisses' verbs point to the passivity of Musella, around whom everything already exists in a world of leisure that neither came to be through labor nor requires labor to continue.<sup>28</sup> In fact, the labor that Musella inspires is "best thoughts."

Philisses even insists that she has slaves, which puts her in a position far from performing labor herself. In addition, her whiteness indicates her leisure and class standing. The contrast between the two poems resonates with Kim F. Hall's incisive work on the meanings of blackness and whiteness. Speaking specifically about white hands in Petrarchan imagery, she points out that whiteness is "the sign of membership of (or aspiration to) a leisured, aristocratic class in which bodies are purest white because they can escape signs of labor such as exposure to the sun."<sup>29</sup>

In act 2, Rustick shows that his construction of love contrasts with the other shepherds and shepherdesses's longing for love. Arcas<sup>30</sup> brings a sport for them: drawing fortunes from a book. Even though this particular sport doesn't require invention, Rustick is not allowed to participate because his stance on love is unlike the other characters'. While the others pine for love (except Lissius, who was nevertheless eloquent about love and pain in act 1), Rustick mistakes personal material want for love:

What call you loue<sup>31</sup> I'haue bin to trouble mov'd  
 as when my best cloke hath by chance bin torne  
 I have liu'd wishing till itt mended were,  
 and butt soe louers doe: nor cowld forbear  
 to cry if I my bag, or bottle lost  
 as louers doe who by theyr loves ar crost,  
 and grieue as much for thes, as they for scorne. (2.86-92)

Rustick's analogies are problematic to Philisses because Rustick, like Touchstone,<sup>32</sup> loves objects instead of people, though he believes those types of love are not different from each other. Later in the play, it is clear that he problematically views Musella as such an object. Here, Rustick's misunderstanding of love sets up the reader to choose between his shallow version and Philisses' heartfelt speech that follows Rustick's. After Rustick's reflections on love, Philisses' speech on love is so convincing that even

### Rustick admits

Sure you doe love you can soe well declare  
the ioyes, and pleasures, hope, and his dispaire. (2.115-6)

He is able to recognize love, but he cannot imitate it—he is outside of that norm established by the play. The two men who vie for Musella are consistently contrasted through their abilities in praising not only their beloved in verse but also love in general, as a measure of their worth as lovers.

It isn't until act 4 that the characters speak to Rustick in a particularly vicious way. He also doesn't defend himself effusively until act 4 where the other characters urge him through mockery to riddle. Lissius,<sup>33</sup> after Philisses says his riddle, urges Rustick to do the same:

Now Rustick fortun's falling on your head  
bring forth yo<sup>r</sup> ridle, fy, in love, and dead  
to such a sport! (4.387-89)

Rustick's reputation as a lover (in order to fit in with the rest of the shepherds) is at stake. Lissius implies that Rustick cannot be in love and yet not want to participate in the sport. Rustick replies to their needling with a pointed catalogue of the differences between himself and the other characters:

Truly I can nott ridle, I'was nott taught  
thes tricks of witt, my thoughts ne're higher wrought  
then how to marck a beast, or drive a cowe  
to feed, or els w<sup>th</sup> art to hold a plowe  
w<sup>ch</sup> if you knew, you surely soone would find  
a matter more of worth then thes od things  
w<sup>ch</sup> never profit, butt some laughter brings. (4.391-97)

Rustick makes a distinct delineation here between agricultural responsibilities and what he considers to be the frivolities of sport, and

arranges them hierarchically by saying that “my thoughts ne’re higher wrought” than agricultural skill. He separates himself from the others by saying that he’s the one with true abilities and true art—and his skill profits, unlike the “tricks of witt” of the other characters.<sup>34</sup> His economic puns here are also concerned with gain via agriculture. He claims that his art with a plow and skills with livestock are profitable while literary art isn’t. He claims that, in fact, the others aren’t even really agrarian workers—he asserts that they do not know how to “marke a beast, or drive a cowe to feed, or else with art to hold a plowe,” and that if they were skilled in these areas, they would “find [them] a matter more of worth then thes od things.” Philisses responds to Rustick’s assertion that agricultural work is more worthy than art: “spoke like a husband, though you yett ar none” (4.399). He puns on Rustick’s identification as a “husband”—a married man and one who works with cattle—accusing him of being neither. When he dismisses him (“though you yett ar none”), he disqualifies him as a lover, and at the same time undermines Rustick’s own claim to worth—his agricultural knowledge. His response here contributes to the contest over who gets to define “worth,” and what that worth will be comprised of. This scene confirms literary expression as the community’s symbolic capital: those without are defined by that lack as surely as those without other forms of capital in public modes of economic exchange.

The ensuing lengthy exchange between Dalina and Rustick shows that all the other characters are aligned against Rustick by virtue of the terms of worth he establishes in this scene. Dalina and Rustick’s vicious exchange also does not bode well for their match at the end of the play. As the scene continues, and the characters respond to what Rustick says, it is even clearer that he serves as the butt of the joke. To Philisses’ goading, Rustick reiterates:

"I can nott ridle" (4.401). Rather mean-spiritedly, Dalina suggests that he should

whistle t'is as good  
for you sufficiently ar understood. (4.401-2)

She notes that Rustick lacks accurate expression; he is unable to use language to ensure his membership in the community's exchange of goods. She suggests that his words are so worthless that were he to whistle he would be understood as well as if he tried (as he has) to create verse. But Dalina's witticism goes over Rustick's head: "What meane you" (4.403) he asks. Dalina answers by brushing away the insult in a sarcastic way:

naught butt y<sup>t</sup> you are  
an honest man, and thrifty, full of care. (4.403-4)

"I thought you had meant wurse" pouts Rustick. Dalina, again sarcastically feigning innocence, says,

meant wurse what I?  
fy this doth showe your doubt, and iealousie.  
why should you take my meaning wurse then t'is? (4.405-7)

She turns his accusations against him, accusing him of jealousy while asserting her innocence. Rustick is excluded from understanding what Dalina says, but the reader is not. Dalina communicates with the audience literally over Rustick's head.

But he eventually picks up on Dalina's sarcasm and defends himself:

Nay I butt smile to see how all you miss  
butt some shall find when I doe seeme to smyle,  
and show best pleas'd I oftnest doe beguile. (4.408-10)

Rustick includes the whole company in his response, accusing them all of "missing" his prowess with women. At the suggestion that Rustick could



beguile any lover with his smiles, Dalina turns vicious and accuses him of being able to beguile only himself:

your self you meane, for few els doe respect  
 your smiles, or frowns, therfor doe nott neglect  
 your pleasant youth, ill will is too soone gott  
 and once that rooted nott soe soone forgott. (4.411-14)

Their hostilities toward him point to the beginnings of Rustick's symbolic exclusion.

The character who throws Rustick's inabilities into relief is the Forester. Because his name is a designation of an agrarian profession rather than a quality or a classical-sounding name, the Forester might be like Rustick but he is in fact a very eloquent speaker and lover. One of the most resonant of the numerous embedded love sonnets in *Loves Victory* is spoken by Forester.<sup>35</sup> He is also the conventional neo-Platonic lover who can love and be strengthened and even metamorphosed by that love, simply through seeing the beloved. Therefore, even though he doesn't technically participate in any of the sports, he uses his eloquence as the same currency as the rest of the characters.

*Loves Victory*'s specific use of language and literary skill to define inclusion and exclusion in a community is analogous to the use of language in Philip Sidney's "The Lady of May."<sup>36</sup> This short pastoral drama was performed at Wanstead, the Earl of Leicester's home during one of Queen Elizabeth's visits.<sup>37</sup> The queen becomes an integral part of the drama: she is asked to choose a husband for the May Lady.<sup>38</sup> The first competitor for her hand is Therion, a forester, described by the May Lady as "the livelier" of her two suitors, and who has "many deserts and many faults."<sup>39</sup> The second is a shepherd, Espilus, who is "richer" than Therion and who offers only "very small deserts" but "no faults" (8). Conventionally, they prove their "desire"

and their “skill” through a singing contest, each singing about why he would be the better match for the May Lady. The queen decides that Espilus, the gentle shepherd, will be the best husband for her.<sup>40</sup> But the most interesting character in the play is Master Rombus who is present on the margins as a commentator on the contest. He is neither shepherd nor forester, but a school master, and speaks from a position as an outsider. His language marks him as external to the community of land workers in the play. His speeches are liberally peppered with marks of his education, pretentious euphemisms and latin phrases in particular (which he often uses incorrectly) that the other characters do not understand. Dorcas the old shepherd even laments: “O poor Dorcas, poor Dorcas, that I was not set in my young days to school, that I might have purchased the understanding of Master Rombus’ mysterious speeches” (10). One such “mysterious speech” is Rombus’ first lines in greeting to the queen:

Now the thunderthumping Jove transfund his dotes into your excellent formosity, which have with your resplendent beams thus segregated the enmity of these rural animals. I am *Potentissima Domina*, a schoolmaster; that is to say, a pedagogue; one not a little versed in the disciplinating of the juvenal fry, wherein (to my laud I say it) I use such geometrical proportion, as neither wanteth mansuetude nor correction, for so it is described: *Parcere subjectis et debellare superbos*. (6-7)

Unlike Dorcas, other characters are not in awe of this type of learning: the May Lady interrupts one of his rambles by calling him a “tedious fool” whose “eyes are not worthy to look to yonder princely sight, much less your foolish tongue to trouble her wise ears” (7).

Rombus’ inclusion in the play could be construed in different ways—do the shepherds in fact, as the lines above from Dorcas suggest, long for the learning of Rombus? Or do they see his language as ridiculously Other in

their own community, as the May Lady suggests? The answers to either question are (for my purposes here) irrelevant because both reveal that he is not of the same class or community as the shepherds and foresters, which is marked by the difference of his language to their own. Robert E. Stillman points out that Rombus' language signifies his displacement from the pastoral world of the entertainment: "the failure to balance words and things has consequences more important than stylistic evils .... Sometimes, misused language is an indication of moral ignorance .... More often, misused language—language that fails to conform to the order of things—points to a failure in judgement."<sup>41</sup> Alan Hager even calls Rombus "the butt of the disorderly shepherds and foresters."<sup>42</sup> Unlike Rustick, whose linguistic abilities are markedly below the other characters', Rombus is marked by a rhetorical height that signifies his class (education) difference from the others. At the end of the entertainment, Rombus is left alone with the queen while all the other characters continue their celebrations offstage. This ending maintains the class difference among characters by allowing Rombus to stand as a figure for Leicester (Rombus gives the queen an agate necklace as a present), and by implication, Sidney.<sup>43</sup>

More evidence is found of the difference between a shepherding class and an academic one in the opening comments of Sidney's *Arcadia*. The narrator makes a distinction between "base" shepherds and Arcadian shepherds based on the difference between modes of labor, privileging Arcadian shepherds because they own their sheep and they invest all their care in this employment. He asserts that Arcadian shepherds "were not such base shepherds as we commonly make account of, but the very owners of the sheep themselves, which in that thrifty world the substantiallest men would employ their whole care upon."<sup>44</sup> However, these shepherds, even though

they are better than “base” shepherds, still are not on par with those who are able to heal the “rudeness” of their songs: “And when they had practised the goodness of their wit in such sports, then was it their manner ever to have one who should write up the substance of that they said; whose pen, having more leisure than their tongues, might perchance polish a little the rudeness of an unthought-on song” (42). There is a clear labor hierarchy here: at the bottom are the “base” shepherds who do not own their sheep, then the Arcadian shepherds who do own their sheep and take good care of them, and then there are those who have the “leisure” to work on the songs the Arcadian shepherds sing—a process which takes more “labor” than does rude “unthought-on song.”

Central to this hierarchy and to the one established in “Lady of May” and in *Loves Victory* is the question of “worth,” which is pointedly mentioned by the May Lady when she asserts that Rombus is not “worthy” to look at or address the queen (though he does). The songs in the *Arcadia* are polished by those who are neither rude nor base. The narrator claims, in fact, that the point of pastoral singing is to “seek a worthy accomplishment” (42) in pleasing their audiences. Similarly, the outcome of the contest in “Lady of May” depends on the choice of the “worthiest” to marry the May Lady. The stage directions note of the foresters that they were able to rejoice in the queen’s choice because “they were overthrown by a most worthy adversary” (12). Therion’s last couplet is testament to this value:

Thus woeful I in woe this salve do find,  
My foul mishap came yet from fairest mind. (13)

The definition of “worth” is central also to Wroth’s pastoral, for the same reasons that I have outlined above. In fact, the occurrences of the word “worth” throughout her works are constantly documented by critics since it is

an anagram for her name.<sup>45</sup> But finding the use of every instance of “worth” as a coded indicator of Wroth herself limits the play of the pun. “Worth”—especially in the context established by both pastorals—equates the notion of authority with (economic) value. My argument by comparing *Loves Victory* to “Lady of May” is not that Wroth is in some way responding to or replying to her uncle’s pastoral, but that they both use a privileged form that is itself the form of what they do (writing/creating “text”). The pastoral world of *Loves Victory* is homologous to “Lady of May”: they are both constitutive of a social hierarchy that takes the power-to-represent seriously as a tool of social practice. *Loves Victory* in particular establishes literary creation as symbolic capital to circulate within and to define a community of leisured shepherds.

### III. Material Wealth and Closure

As *Loves Victory* unfolds, Rustick changes from a comic buffoon to a self-identified believer in agrarian profit whose values appear very different from the others characters’ of the play. But act 5 cements his inferior social status. For the other characters at the end of act 4, all seems to be well, even though Cupid asserts that they will still suffer: Lissius and Simena have discovered their love for each other, and even Musella and Philisses, though they keep their love a secret, have happily admitted their love for each other. The dynamic plot development which comes in act 5 is fuelled by the threat of Rustick’s class mobility and pretension. It is here that we learn for the first time that Musella is contracted to marry Rustick.<sup>46</sup> The veneer of the pastoral is broken by the unwelcome intrusion of the actual material world of mothers, father’s wills and unwanted marriages. While pastorals such as *As You Like It* document a renewing move from the court to the country, but

back to the court again, each of the characters in Wroth's drama remains totally immersed in the pastoral world. McLaren notes that the world of pastoral in *Loves Victory* is totally self-contained: "In 'Loves Victory' the rustics are real. Their world stops at the edge of field and forest and there is no mention of court or courtiers .... They and their companions ... do not turn out to be the disguised sons and daughters of kings and queens. They are confined by their author to the never-never world of the pastoral" (289-90). The final act therefore is an attempt to wrestle back the material world's interference in the idealized world that has been carefully crafted in the preceding acts.

Distraught at the news that her mother is planning to hold her to her contract to marry Rustick, Musella begins to catalogue problems with the match, the primary of those is his "unworthiness." Before, Rustick had seemed to be an innocuous, albeit intrusive, part of their community. Now he impinges on it offensively. Musella tells Simena how she and her mother are bound by her father's will:

Alas I've vrg'd her, till y<sup>t</sup> she w<sup>th</sup> teares  
 did vowe, and grieve she could nott mend my state  
 agreed on by my fathers will w<sup>ch</sup> bears  
 sway in her brest, and duty in mee. (5.11-14)

Though she does not explicitly reveal why it is the match was made in the first place, Musella's lament that opens act 5 suggests that it would be economically advantageous.

Surprisingly, we now learn that Rustick is actually "wealthy"--a paradox, because even though he is wealthy, he is still "rustic." Musella's lament contrasts her true lover with her husband-to-be:

O Eyes that day can see, and cannott mend  
 what my ioys poyson, must my wreched end  
 proceed from love? and yett my true love crost  
 neglected for bace gaine, and all worthe lost  
 for riches? then t'is time for good to dy  
 when wealth must wed vs to all misery. (5.1-6)

In their search for the biographical analogy in the play, critics often consider the mention of “riches” as a gloss for Penelope Rich.<sup>47</sup> This choice of reading a specifically economic pun *only* as a reference to a person could also be seen to represent a mode of determining social relationships based in real wealth is an example of the way this play has been privatized. What I want to note is that this passage is a clear assertion of Rustick’s wealth.<sup>48</sup> That wealth makes him different from the other characters because it does not also signify “worth.” Musella sets up a dichotomy between “bace gain” and riches on the one hand and true love and “all worthe” on the other, so that money/wealth *cannot* signify “worth.” The sports of act 4 have painstakingly determined that literacy in sport coupled with the correct (unmaterialistic) version of love is the symbolic currency upon which the characters’ community has social meaning and value. The other characters have demonstrated their ability to circulate their goods in the community and have profited by the love matches that have occurred; such pairings sanction the values of the community in a conventional way. which the other characters have by their own definition. Musella’s comments about Rustick reinforce this construction of literary worth and value as symbolic capital. The grounds of the tension here are the same as they were in Rustick’s struggle to define agricultural labor as what is “worthy” rather than the “od things” of the other characters’ literary sport. He doesn’t understand that in his community, love and worth aren’t equated with property or material goods, but that Musella defines it (and so do the

others) as something pointedly not material: the closure of the play includes Musella forsaking those riches for the love she and Philisses have. The ultimate expression of their love is complete when they offer to kill themselves--when they completely leave the material world.

Thus, the play rejects wealth--money, property, "base gain"--as a signifier of class status. What serves to determine a socio-economic hierarchy, and to define what is at the top of the hierarchy is pointedly not material wealth. Class is shaped in this play not in terms of economic capital, but rather, on symbolic capital in which value is not located in the base material world, but rather in the more idealized, intangible world of "worth." *Loves Victory*'s definition of worth includes among its requisites reputation and literary prowess, attributes that the lower but wealthier class do not have and, as represented in this play, cannot acquire. I would note here that the community deals in symbolic capital and not in real capital. Love is constructed as something pointedly opposite of real capital. The need for real capital is elided. But that elision of the need for real capital is an elision that *itself* serves as symbolic capital. Real capital is not unnecessary, only reified.

As the final act develops, the antagonism toward Rustick grows greater and greater, with his class difference from Musella's taking center stage. The news of the betrothal disturbs the other characters. More than once in act 5, the characters refer to him as a clown, which does in fact mean a jester or a fool, but of course has distinct class denotations also, for at the time it meant a rustic, or one without manners, and also a peasant,<sup>49</sup> one of a particular group of poor land workers. This play on words suggests his class status, and suggests, as his name implies, that his personality, class, and family name are all interchangeable. Rustick's character serves as short hand for class sentiments--he becomes the figure for a recognition of "baseness" or



unworthiness, displaced onto the figure of the rustic shepherd—not the idealized shepherd of conventional pastoral. In fact, the characters lament Rustick and Musella’s marriage along class lines; even characters who haven’t been present in the action since act 1 come out to denounce this planned marriage. They feel sorry for Musella and Philisses who cannot now be together, and horrified by the betrothal because Rustick would be a socially unequal marriage partner.

The classed othering of Rustick begins in earnest in conversation between Musella and Philisses. She tells her true love that she made the promise to marry Rustick when she thought that Philisses did not love her:

I would I could deny the words I spake  
when I did Rusticks marriage offer take  
hopeles of you I gaue, my ill consent,  
and wee contracted were w<sup>ch</sup> I repent. (5.69-72)

But she uses the term “clowne” as a classed reason to repent having to marry him. Her regret reveals the distinct othering occurring in the play:

the time now curse, my tounge wish out w<sup>ch</sup> gaue  
mee to that clowne w<sup>t</sup> whom I wed my graue. (5.73-4)

Equation of the clown Rustick with a grave as a low, undesirable place points to the lowliness of the match (though interestingly, Musella and Philisses do choose the actual grave over her marriage to him).

Even Arcas, the villain of the play, recognizes Rustick’s status in clearly hierarchical terms:

This t’is to looke soe high, and to dispise  
all loves that rose nott pleasing in her eyes  
now she that soar’de aloft all day, att night  
must roost in a poore bush w<sup>t</sup> small delight. (5.136-9)

He uses spatial metaphors to describe Musella's "fall" into marrying Rustick. This marriage would cause her to be forcibly domesticated in Rustick's low roost, from her position "soar[ing] aloft all day." That even Arcas the villain appears to make this observation means that he is more consonant with the values of the community than Rustick is: he recognizes the inequality and thus the inappropriateness of the match while Rustick is the only one who does not. In fact, Rustick's reaction to his betrothal is joyful. He enters act 5 happily, talking about his marriage. He shows that he is still clearly linked with specifically agricultural modes of expression:

all att my fortune cheere, all smile w<sup>t</sup> ioye,  
sheepe, goates, and Cattle glad that I inioye. (5.266-7)

Rustick perceives "all" are happy for him, but the reference for "all" is the animals, not the community of people around him. Dalina answers, presumably in an aside, equating Rustick with the animals:

I neuer lov'd him, now I hate him, fy  
to thinke Musella by this beast must ly. (5.268-9)

Similarly to Arcas, Dalina points to the social levelling that would occur if Musella and Rustick were to marry: she would "ly" by "this beast," so that they would be equal, but equally low. Musella's worth isn't enough to offset his shortcomings. This line with its suggestion of bestiality also suggests the horror of a sexual mixing of the classes.

These references come in tandem with praise for Musella's worth, so that the characters at once set Musella higher as they denigrate Rustick. Their assertions of her height compared to his lowliness make him seem even further down, opening a huge gulf between their social statuses. It is important to note that such assertions are not necessary until Musella's

father's will threatens to allow Rustick access to her as symbolic capital as a wife. Climena and Lacon (who used to love Musella) converse about the unworthiness of the match:

Cli:

... Musella must  
this day bee marie'd is nott loue uniust  
to suffer this distastefull mach to bee  
against her choyse ....

La:

... yett thus is loue uniust to lett her wed  
one who she neuer see's, butt wisheth dead, ....  
I was vnworthy of her, and she farr  
too worthy for this clowne; Ô she, the starr  
of light, and beauty, must she, louely she?  
bee machd to Rustick bace, vnworthy hee? (5.160-3; 166-7; 170-3)

Climena and Lacon's outspokenness serves to finally bifurcate Musella and Rustick because of clearly hierarchical discrepancies. Lacon's tirade suggests his own position in a finally-articulated hierarchy, suggested by the "farr" which denotes distance: "I was unworthy of her, and she farr / Too worthy for this clowne." He places himself between Musella and Rustick, thereby reinforcing Rustick's lowliness as well as Musella's superiority. In this exchange, Climena and Lacon insist conventionally that she is light/white, beautiful, and worthy, while he is base, unworthy, and a clown. Each of these ideas is class oriented, especially if worth is understood to be, in this case, a specific construction of symbolic capital. It defines value with its attendant economic implications. Here, the colors associated with the characters points to strict differences in their classes. Kim Hall has noted that a use of whiteness and purity intrinsically yokes notions of race and class, each signifying the other: "the language of whiteness and fairness thus simultaneously articulate ideologies of race, class, and gender" (209).

Musella's high position becomes the focal point of the last moments of

the play when the shepherds and shepherdesses see the dead Philisses and Musella at the altar of Love. (They are not really dead, but have taken a potion given to them by Silvesta which will facilitate the happy ending of the play. But not even Silvesta knows that the potion is only temporary--the characters believe they are truly dead.) They immediately speak Musella's praises in conventional terms. Absent from their eulogy is any mention of the also-dead Philisses, an excision that highlights that worth becomes a specifically feminized trait. The way the scene is constructed exposes Rustick's selfishness and his dissonance with the other characters: he speaks the first lines, and five of the shepherds and shepherdesses speak a series of couplets that then end with Rustick again. I cite the entire passage below because the development of it shows that Rustick's concerns are misplaced--they are nothing like the other characters' responses to her death. He does not praise her but rather shows callous concern for his own well-being while the other characters express their grief at her death, and reiterate her superiority, again using light/dark metaphors to express her virtue and her current absence (configured by darkness) because of her "death":

Ru:

How, is she married, and thus coussend mee,  
And dead, and buried, how can all this bee? ....

Li:

O heav'n, was she too rare a prize for earth,  
Or were wee only hapy in her birth?

Da:

Only made rich injoying of her sight;  
She gon, expect wee nothing butt sad night.

Fyllis:

What glory day did give us was to show  
The vertu in her beauty seem'd to grow.

Cli:

Sweet love, and freindship in her shined bright,  
Now dim'd ar both since dark'ned is her light.

La:

Noe worthe did live which in her had nott spring,

And she thus gon to her grave worth doth bring.

Ru:

I lik'd her well, butt she ne're car'd for mee,  
Yett ame I sorry wee thus parted bee. (5.296-311)

After Rustick hears that she has killed herself because she loves Philisses, and did not want to marry Rustick, he again expresses not grief for lost love, but rather relief that he isn't any longer contracted to her since she had "coussend" him by loving another man:

Nay, if she lov'd an other, farwell, she;  
I'me glad she by her death hath made me free. (5.364-5)

But Lissius castigates him for his callousness, again assigning Rustick's selfishness to his class status:

Is this your care, O clownish part, can you  
For shame nott sorrow, when *owr* harts do rue? (5.366-7)

Lissius' lines show his own recognition that Rustick is apart from them, since he does not "sorrow, when *owr* harts do rue." Rustick answers: "I'me free, I care nott" (5.368). To prove that he really renounces any claims on Musella, the priests at the temple of Love ask Rustick to

disclaime the right  
In lyfe was tyde to you. (5.477-8)

Rustick complies:

I love noe sprites nor those affect nott mee,  
She lov'd Philisses, therfor she is free.  
Were she alive, she were her owne to chuse  
Thus heer to her all claime I doe refuse. (5.479-82)

At the point where Rustick formally gives her up, the priests bring Musella and Philisses back to life. It is then revealed that the potion had been given to Silvesta by Venus, who arranged this fake death so that Musella could be

freed from her contract to marry Rustick. Once she has been released by Rustick, the exchange model of the material world (wealth buys the woman as symbolic capital in marriage) has been successfully replaced by the exchange model of this pastoral world (the currency of mutual, non-material love suspended in the medium of literary merit). Therefore, Rustick no longer is seen as a threat—even Venus, in her explanation of why she allowed the death to occur, does not mention the unworthiness of Philisses' competitor; it would be unnecessary because he is no longer a factor. It is only when he impinges on the way Musella circulates as symbolic capital that he is considered unworthy. His marriage at the end is a sign, perhaps, that he has been accepted back into the "fold." But his mate will be Dalina, and Musella's ironic comment on Dalina and Rustick's marriage is prescient of its eventual demise, or at least of the appropriateness of the match, unlike her own with Rustick: "A good exchange, and every one agreed" (5.551), she says.

#### IV. Reading as Capital

*Loves Victory* ends circularly where it began with the same egalitarian sense that Lewalski identifies. But there is an important difference: a hierarchy among the characters has been carefully sorted out in order to facilitate a (mystified) socially equal community. Because Venus and Cupid (who have apparently been determining the action of the play) inhabit the space of the stage with the other characters at the very end, there does appear to be a leveling among all the characters, not just the shepherds and shepherdesses. And it is also true that Rustic agrees to marry and love Dalina, so that his actions are consonant with the other characters'. While Arcas is punished, he doesn't—in fact, he cannot, as his punishment—leave the community of the

shepherds and shepherdesses. However, this particular resolution can come only when Musella is inoculated against Rustick's class pretensions by his disavowal to any right to her hand in marriage. Therefore, the sense of equality and the "non-hierarchical"<sup>50</sup> feel of the play comes *because* a hierarchy is carefully in place, and even obscured by a sense of appropriateness—that the base marry the base, and the truly "noble" marry the truly "noble." In fact, it is the very threat to this particular carefully ordered social vision that mobilizes the last act of the play.

In *Loves Victory*, love becomes idealized as an emotional state rather than one that has its material roots in the economic exchange of marriage. The idea of mutual love, integral to the relationships of the play, is a means by which the institution of marriage is mystified and allowed to operate ideologically more efficiently. It is exactly a dichotomy between love and economic marriage arrangements, embodied in the two options from which Musella can choose, that act 5 performs. The play constitutes the hierarchy of love and wealth which determines "worth," so that Musella, given the choice of true love or wealth, chooses true love and eschews "base gain." This dichotomy, which is underwritten by pastoral's deployment of latent labor signified by leisure activity, determines the social hierarchy of the play. But it also requires the reading skills of the audience to ensure the appropriate interpretation.

The conventions of the text (the happy, class-appropriate marriage) creates a space in the hierarchy for the reader. Mary Ellen Lamb, in a reading of Sidney's *Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, makes a similar claim for the function of pastoral. She asserts that in Musidorus' narrative, a differentiation of the classes is caused by a split in audience within the storyline. Musidorus, a prince disguised as a shepherd, tells his story to

Pamela and her servant, Mopsa. Musidorus tells the story in such a way as to conceal his identity from Mopsa (who even falls asleep toward the end of his narrative), while at the same time revealing it to Pamela. Lamb concludes that “by constructing the proper reception of a text—the ability to discern its qualities and to decipher its cues—as a skill distinguishing upper-class from lower-class auditors, Musidorus’s division of his audience extends outward to sort readers of the *Arcadia* according to their own location in class.”<sup>51</sup> This technique, Lamb argues, creates a class position for the audience because the audience is aligned with Pamela while reading Musidorus’ story correctly. The telling of the story excludes Mopsa and helps to classify her as Other (57-8). Similarly, when characters like Philisses and Dalina taunt and mock Rustick, they mark him as Other to the audience. If the reader interprets the conventions of the play (pastoral mystification of labor relations, marriage ending the plot) within their ideological usage, then the reader is rewarded with inclusion into Musella’s class by being able to read Rustick as Other. Since the salience of the class hierarchy is replicated in the reader, the use of this genre also indicates the “worth” of the writer of the pastoral through her labor as a creator. Since she creates pastoral sports, she is analogous to the characters of the play who perform their sports well.

The pastoral world of this play performs a social use of class difference as a means of promoting a version of class privilege and the dominance of representation in the construction of that privilege by defining what it is not. Through conventional figures of pastoral, and through a traditional comedic plot which ends happily in the marriage of the main characters, an aristocratic version of social hierarchy is created and maintained in the play. The play reifies symbolic capital because it excludes the need for real capital from its community. The play’s version of true love as outside of materially-oriented



**culture is itself a very classed idea--it comes from a sense of leisure. This public context for the play shows that a mystified representation of the Other is a formidable way of exercising power and constructing a value system.**

## CHAPTER II NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Bruno Snell, *The Discovery of the Mind*, cited in Sukanta Chaudhuri, *Renaissance Pastoral and its English Developments* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), 4.

<sup>2</sup> John Bernard, "Recent Studies in Renaissance Pastoral," *English Literary Renaissance* 26 (1996), 356-84. Citation from 357.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Alpers, *What Is Pastoral?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), x-xi.

<sup>4</sup> Annabel Patterson, *Pastoral and Ideology: Virgil to Valery* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 7.

<sup>5</sup> Patterson, 6-7. She writes that she has no desire to "augment or challenge" (6) the work of the scholars she lists.

<sup>6</sup> Both essays are in *Soliciting Interpretations: Literary Theory and Seventeenth-Century English Poetry*, edited by Elizabeth D. Harvey and Katharine Eisaman Maus (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 174-98, and 89-118, respectively.

<sup>7</sup> I am conscious of Jameson's reminder that "One cannot without intellectual dishonesty assimilate the 'production' of texts ... to the production of goods by factory workers: writing and thinking are not alienated labor in that sense, and it is surely fatuous for intellectuals to seek to glamorize their tasks ... by assimilating them to real work on the assembly line and to the experience of the resistance of matter in genuine manual labor." *The Political Unconscious* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1981), 45. In fact, the equation of text production with labor is exactly the terms on which the play mystifies social relations.

<sup>8</sup> For example, the workers in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are not textually represented as workers, even though their names denote their professions, but as *players*. From their first scene, their concern has been with the play they will perform for the king's wedding. When he introduces their play, Philostrate even notes that the players are "Hard-hearted men that work in Athens here, / Which never labor'd in their minds till now" (5.1.72-3), suggesting that their labor has been bodily.

<sup>9</sup> It was pastoral convention, following Tasso's *Aminta* and Sidney's eclogues, to have a different sport structuring each act's play action. See Barbara Lewalski, "Mary Wroth's *Love's Victory* and Pastoral Tragicomedy," in *Reading Mary Wroth: Representing Alternatives in Early Modern England*, edited by Naomi J Miller and Gary Waller (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), 88-108.

<sup>10</sup> Louis Adrian Montrose, "'Eliza, Queene of shepherdes,' and the Pastoral of Power," *English Literary Renaissance* 10 (1980), 153-82. Citation from 172.

<sup>11</sup> Louis Adrian Montrose, "Of Gentlemen and Shepherds: the Politics of Elizabethan Pastoral Form," *ELH* 50 (1983), 415-459. Citation from 431.

<sup>12</sup> Montrose, "'Eliza, Queene of shepherdes,' and the Pastoral of Power," 155.

<sup>13</sup> As just one suggestion of the situation of laborers, I cite the social historian Keith Wrightson: "The fate ... of landless or near landless labourers and cottagers was unequivocally bad for most of this period .... Where they enjoyed common rights their situation might be alleviated in some degree, and for this reason enclosure and the extinction of such rights could constitute a real social crisis in areas with a substantial cottaging population. In fielden areas they might find themselves thereafter wholly dependent upon wage labour, while in some pastoral areas the result could be very widespread distress .... The numbers involved in rural industries grew throughout our period in response to both domestic and overseas demand. Dependent on the market for their food and upon uncertain employment for the means to buy it, their situation was rarely better than tolerable .... The labouring poor of London were described by a preacher to the Virginia Company in 1622 as people who rose early, worked all day and went late to bed, yet were 'scarce able to put bread in their mouths at the week's end and clothes on their backs at the year's end.'" *English Society, 1580-1680* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1982), 138-9.

<sup>14</sup> Richard Halpern, *The Poetics of Primitive Accumulation: English Renaissance Culture and the Genealogy of Capital* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 5.

<sup>15</sup> In addition to Halpern, for criticism of pastoral within theories of capitalist change, see *Enclosure Acts: Sexuality, Property, and Culture in Early Modern England*, edited by Richard Burt and John Michael Archer (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994); and Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (Oxford and London: Oxford University Press, 1973), especially chapter 3: "Pastoral and Anti-Pastoral," 13-34.

<sup>16</sup> Bernard, 356. Bernard cites Empson's *Some Versions of Pastoral* (1935).

<sup>17</sup> Louis Montrose, *The Purpose of Playing: Shakespeare and the Cultural Politics of the Elizabethan Theatre* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 111.

<sup>18</sup> Thelma N. Greenfield and others have suggested that books like *Arcadia* were used as manuals for the socially ambitious. Cited in Mary Ellen Lamb, "Exhibiting Class and Displaying the Body in Sidney's *Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*," *Studies in English Literature* 97 (1997): 55-72. See 58.

<sup>19</sup> Arthur Freeman, "Love's Victory: A Supplementary Note," *The Library* 19 (1997), 252-4. Freeman concludes, following Roberts, that the Huntington manuscript is the Dering manuscript. Therefore, he writes, the play can be dated between 1619 and 1624 based on the dates that Edward Dering was collecting plays (254).

<sup>20</sup> Margaret Anne McLaren, "An Unknown Continent: Lady Mary Wroth's Forgotten Pastoral Drama, 'Loves Victorie,'" in *The Renaissance Englishwoman in Print: Counterbalancing the Canon*, edited by Anne M. Haselkorn and Betty S. Travitsky (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1990), 276-94. Citation from 281.

<sup>21</sup> In particular, see Marion Wynne-Davies, "So much *Worth* as lives in you: Veiled Portraits of the Sidney Women," *Sidney Newsletter & Journal* 14 (1996), 45-56. For an introduction that places *Loves Victory* in the context of other pastoral dramas, see Lewalski, 89-95; Brennan, 11-15; and Josephine A. Roberts, *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), 53-9. While Lewalski, Brennan, and Roberts articulate the similarities between Wroth's play and other pastoral dramas, Margaret Anne McLaren highlights its differences. See especially 282-89.

<sup>22</sup> Carolyn Ruth Swift, "Feminine Self-Definition in Lady Mary Wroth's *Loves Victorie* (c. 1621)" *English Literary Renaissance* 19 (1989), 171-88. Citation from 175.

<sup>23</sup> Josephine A. Roberts, "Deciphering Women's Pastoral: Coded Language in Wroth's *Love's Victory*" in *Representing Women in Renaissance England*, edited by Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1997), 163-74. Citation from 173.

<sup>24</sup> Lewalski, 96.

<sup>25</sup> See the OED, "rustic," which is an adjective as well as noun (a poor country dweller). Montrose's interesting, though brief, discussion of Bottom the weaver as a name that functions similarly: "Bottom's name relates him to the practice of his craft--the 'bottom' was the 'core on which the weaver's skein of yarn was wound' .... Bottom's name also relates him, more generally, to his relatively lowly position in the temporal order, to his social baseness" (*Purpose* 180-1).

<sup>26</sup> In Brennan's transcript of the manuscript, these lines appear as one long verse, every other line indented. But it is apparent from the manuscript, from the words that are capitalized and from the spacing (though it is subtle), that this is actually a three-stanza poem. Michael G. Brennan, ed., *Lady Mary Wroth's Love's Victory: The Penshurst Manuscript* (London: The Roxburge Club, 1988).

<sup>27</sup> Brennan emends this phrase to "I me".

<sup>28</sup> Both blazons depend on the passivity and fragmentation of the beloved, as was Petrarchan convention. See Nancy J. Vickers, "Diana Described: Scattered Women and Scattered Rhyme," *Critical Inquiry* 8 (1981), 265-79; and Nancy J. Vickers, "'The blazon of sweet beauty's best': Shakespeare's Lucrece," in *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, edited by Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman (London and New York: Methuen, 1985), 95-115.

<sup>29</sup> Kim F. Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995), 209.

<sup>30</sup> Arcas is noted as the villain in the Penshurst manuscript's list of characters. Arcas was the name of the traditional hero of Arcadia. He appears in a Ben Jonson masque, "Pan's Anniversary" (1620) and was danced by Prince Charles. See Martin Butler, "Ben Jonson's *Pan's Anniversary* and the Politics of Early Stuart Pastoral," *English Literary Renaissance* 22 (1992), 369-404. See 371.

<sup>31</sup> Brennan adds a question mark at this point.

<sup>32</sup> See *As You Like It*, 2.4.46-55. See also act 3, scene 3 where Touchstone fancies himself a poet, wishing that Audrey was herself "poetical" (line 16).

<sup>33</sup> Brennan attributes this speech to Philisses, though "Li:" appears above these lines on manuscript page 34v.

<sup>34</sup> While in this passage, Rustick presents himself as a worker, the one place that Rustick talks about himself working, he in fact claims to have fallen asleep: "I was butt .../ marking some kattle and a sleepe I fell" (4.29r).

<sup>35</sup> Josephine A. Roberts, "The Huntington Manuscript of Lady Mary Wroth's Play, *Loves Victory*," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 46 (1983), 156-74, especially 168-9.

<sup>36</sup> Many scholars writing about *Loves Victory* compare it to Sidney's pastoral drama, since Wroth was his niece. See McLaren, 284-5; Josephine Roberts points out some of the similarities between *The Lady of May* and *Loves Victory*, but concludes that the former was not a source for the latter. See Roberts, *Poems*, 56.

<sup>37</sup> Katherine Duncan-Jones narrows the dating of the play: "The Queen visited [the Earl of Leicester at Wanstead] in May 1578 and May 1579, and it is impossible to determine to which year *The Lady of May* belongs." See *Sir Philip Sidney* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 334, n5. However, Edward Berry details the precise dating of the play to May 13-16, 1578 in his "Sidney's May Game for the Queen," *Modern Philology* 86 (1989), 252-64. See 252-3, 4n.

<sup>38</sup> Critics suggest that the format (having the queen actually choose the outcome of the short production by judging the singing competition between the competitors) and the content (choosing husbands) are Sidney's commentary on the queen's own marriage negotiations. See Duncan-Jones, 334, n5.

<sup>39</sup> Duncan-Jones, 8.

<sup>40</sup> Stephen Orgel argues that Sidney intended the queen to choose Therion the forester rather than Espilus the shepherd. See his "Sidney's Experiment in Pastoral: *The Lady of May*" in his *The Jonsonian Masque* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 44-57. Edward Berry's article cited above builds on Orgel's argument.

<sup>41</sup> Robert E. Stillman, "Justice and the 'Good Word' in Sidney's *The Lady of May*," *Studies in English Literature* 24 (1984), 23-38. Citation from 31-2.

<sup>42</sup> Alan Hager, "Rhomboid Logic: Anti-idealism and a Cure for Recusancy in Sidney's *Lady of May*," *ELH* 57 (1990), 485-502. Citation from 489.

<sup>43</sup> For a reading of Sidney as Rombus, see Berry, 261-4. Berry notes that Sidney's writing of himself as Rombus is not a comfortable fit—that Sidney is grappling with upper class education through Rombus' pretension.

<sup>44</sup> Duncan-Jones, 42.

<sup>45</sup> Seventeenth-century writers composing poems to Wroth often punned on her name to praise her as "worthy." Josuah Sylvester (1613) refers to her as "*Al-Worth*," while in the same year, George Wither writes "There is no happie *Muse* this day remaines; / That doth not for your *Worth* and bounty owe." William Gamage (1613), "in a rather heavy-handed epigram," notes Lewalski, "correct[s] the title she has from her husband: 'For R the O; then justly Lady Worth / I might thee stile, worth what? hie honours Grace'" There is also Ben Jonson's often-cited statement that "my Lady Wroth is unworthily married on a Jealous husband." Each instance is cited in Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, *Writing Women in Jacobean England* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1993), 245-7.

<sup>46</sup> See S.P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies, eds., *Renaissance Drama by Women: Text and Documents* (New York and London: Routledge, 1996). In their notes, the editors argue for an earlier revelation of the betrothal: they interpret the riddling by Philisses and Musella to refer to Musella's betrothal to Rustick (206, n71 and n78), but while the riddles do indeed reveal anxieties about other lovers, it is by no means clear that they acknowledge the betrothal, nor do other discussions by the characters. From act 1, it has been clear that Rustick is enamoured of Musella, though he denies being in love, and neither Musella or Philisses acknowledge the betrothal in their soliloquys about the reservations they have about showing their love for each other. It also seems that in act 5, Philisses is genuinely amazed by the news that she is contracted. The only evidence that Musella knew about her betrothal before act 5 is Musella's retrospect lament to Philisses:

I would I could deny the words I spake,  
When I did Rustick's marriage offer take.  
Hopeles of you, I gave my ill consent (5.69-71).

However, these lines (5. 68-74) are missing from the Huntington manuscript. Roberts posits therefore that the Huntington manuscript seems to be an early draft ("The Huntington Manuscript of Lady Mary Wroth's Play, *Loves Victory*," 162). That these lines do not appear in an earlier draft suggests that perhaps Wroth hadn't originally meant for Musella to know of her betrothal to Rustick until act 5.

<sup>47</sup> See Wynne-Davies, 54; and Swift, 184-7.

<sup>48</sup> Reading recursively with this lament in mind, it is apparent that there are puns on "fortune" in act 2. When Arcas brings the book, Rustick insists on holding it while Musella chooses her "fortune:"

What shalbee you need nott feare  
Rustick doth thy fortune beare  
draw, and when you chosen haue  
prays me who such fortune gaue. (2.151-4)

Rustick takes the credit for her fortune, meaning her luck, but paired with Musella's disavowal of material riches in act 5, this is yet another place that Rustick is associated with wealth.

<sup>49</sup> OED, "clown." The "rude mechanicals" in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are also referred to as "clowns." See the opening stage directions to act 3, scene 1 (Riverside Shakespeare).

<sup>50</sup> Lewalski, 99, 105.

<sup>51</sup> Lamb, 57.

## CHAPTER III

### THE NOBLE WOMAN IN THE HUMBLE COTTAGE (THE LADY CONTEMPLATION)

Lady Poor Virtue, one of the heroines of Margaret Cavendish's *The Lady Contemplation* (1662), outlines the reasons she refuses to work as a Lady's servant in the face of her new-found poverty. Contrasting a palace with a more humble abode, she asserts, "I had rather shrow'd my honest Poverty in a thatcht house, than live in a Palace to be pointed at for my misfortunes" (101). She lists the problems that wealth breeds: "vice ... Pride ... Faction ... Riot ... Extortion red with Vanity, Beauty catcht with Flattery, Chastity endangered with Power, and Virtue slandered by Envy" (188). This catalogue is of vices exactly opposite of those implied by her name (Virtue). In the course of the play, she proves her repudiation of all these problems. Faced with the option of succumbing to vice by participating in the wealth of a palace, she determines she would rather become a cottager: "if I could get a service in an honest poor Farmers house, I might live happy, as being most obscure from the World, and the Worlds Vices .... in an humble Cottage the industrious, and laborious Masters command their Servants friendly and kindly, and are obeyed with love" (188). While the humble cottage might signify obscurity and invisibility, it guarantees virtue and happiness through service and labor.

The humble cottage is a recurring image in Margaret Cavendish's plays, sometimes signified by its inhabitant, the humble cottager. The cottager is

never a character, but always a metaphor or an image that can be gendered either male or female and is used as a vehicle for representing the dynamics of class relationships. "Real" cottagers—workers or laborers—are not referred to as "cottagers," a rhetorical mark reserved for nobility in disguise. The disguise of the cottager functions in a way homologous to the character of the pastoral shepherd, as a strategic image of the lower classes that by implication reinforces the class privilege of the other characters inevitably set against this image of humility. The cottager therefore signifies much more than a lowly class station; it is a metaphor that serves as a liminal identity purposefully taken up by a character who pursues status elevation, rather than the true humility of the cottage.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, by taking on identity of the cottager, Lady Poor Virtue is able to exhibit her humility and virtue which will eventually win her a husband of high social status. In this case, the humble cottager does double duty: it expresses both a static version of the social hierarchy by mystifying its own poverty. It also expresses the virtuous woman's place within that social hierarchy. It is often the case in Cavendish's plays that some form of "humility" (loss of social identity through disguise or poverty, or both) conveys the aristocratic woman to a glorious restoration of status, wealth, and property. She comes full circle to her status before her liminal state, but that status is represented as permanent, and not revokable by any new trial.<sup>2</sup> This chapter argues that in the various conjunctions of the cottager and the virtuous woman, Cavendish's plays express a distribution of class relationships. In addition to the resolution of the character as a member of class privilege, one of the social positions expressed in *The Lady Contemplation* is that of the author's status as a member of the aristocracy. The humble cottage almost always serves as a temporary liminal place of gestation for the noble woman.

In the same way, then, that pastoral sport functions as symbolic capital in the service of maintaining class difference in Wroth's *Loves Victory*, the use of low-class disguise ensures and normalizes the class hierarchy in Cavendish's *The Lady Contemplation*. In both of these plays, class is a medium through which the author function is performed. To demonstrate, I will consider both the front matter of the folio and the structure of *The Lady Contemplation* which I will argue work together to present the plays as the work of a leisured aristocratic woman completely within the ideological requirements of her station and gender. In particular, aristocratic authorial labor in the folio can have value only if the author presents herself as chaste.<sup>3</sup> As I will show in the final section of this chapter, the seemingly dissimilar images of the aristocratic woman and the humble cottager are actually mobilized to the same end in the folio: they both perform the specific class vision that informs the mode of (female) authority engaged in the folio.

### I. Generic Convention and Liminal Movement

Early works such as Dolores Paloma's 1980 article on Cavendish's plays, Nancy Cotton's book *Women Playwrights in England, 1363-1750* (1980), and Moira Ferguson's excerpt in *First Feminists* of Cavendish's *The Convent of Pleasure* sparked an interest in Cavendish's drama. The two sets of Cavendish's works that currently draw the most scholarly comment are her scientific writings, and her utopia, *The Blazing World* (1666). These genres appeal in part because scholars can hail Cavendish as the writer of the "first" utopia in English by a woman, and the "first" woman to write scientific observations.<sup>4</sup> But Margaret Ferguson has recently noted that the discourse of "firsts" creates the problematic category of "female 'autonomy.'"<sup>5</sup> Drawing on



Ferguson, Jonathan Goldberg notes that “these ‘firsts’ arise as Worthy Women, exceptional women triumphing over the constraints of gender.”<sup>6</sup> It might be therefore, that a potential explanation for the dramas receiving less critical attention is that her plays tend toward the conventional, unlike her scientific writing or her utopia. Margaret Ezell points out that “while we lament the scarcity of women writers from earlier periods, there is a tendency to devalue or even to ‘reinvent’ those who do not conform to our criteria of ‘good feminists.’”<sup>7</sup> Cavendish’s status as a “feminist” is often at stake in criticism. As Catherine Gallagher points out, “it is ... hard[] to imagine her as a typical early feminist.”<sup>8</sup> Agreeing with this sentiment, Jacqueline Pearson is skeptical of attempts to read her as a feminist because they do not take into consideration Cavendish’s “ambivalence” regarding marriage.<sup>9</sup> This “ambivalence” is used to maintain a loophole for finding Cavendish’s resistance to patriarchal convention and thus positing her as a feminist. But the question of whether or not Cavendish was a feminist can be fruitfully suspended in order to determine the social function of her texts, in particular, the way their particular construction of marriage aids in conventional generic closure.

For the most part, critics see Cavendish as critical of marriage; and indeed, Cavendish creates characters who speak against marriage as an institution. Pearson claims that Cavendish “insist[ed] on women’s right to choose for themselves the way they wish to live” (133), especially in terms of their marriage status. Linda R. Payne writes that “one aspect of the unusual vision of author and heroines is rejection of the traditional marriages of the time” (23). Comparing Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* with Cavendish’s *Wits Cabal*, Mihoko Suzuki reads Cavendish as a satirist, concluding that Cavendish’s “satirical energies are ... directed ... against patriarchy’s successful

indoctrination of its members to internalize the compulsion to marry,"<sup>10</sup> thereby "expos[ing] and mock[ing] the exaggerated value placed by the institution of the patriarchal family on woman's chastity" (487). Likewise, Laura J. Rosenthal finds in plays such as *The Presence* and *The Convent of Pleasure* a possibility of homoerotics for female subjectivity: "the duchess seeks to disrupt a system within her elite experience in which the opposition between masculine and feminine (in the service of the heterosexual matrix) creates an opposition between the subject positions of owner and non-owner."<sup>11</sup> These critics usefully and successfully concentrate on the meaning of the diversity of Cavendish's female characters and their relationships to marriage.

However, often this construction is undermined by the use of marriage as a conventional closure of the play. Andrew Hiscock, for example, notes that "all of Cavendish's plays initially point to the fact that the existing cultural order is inadequately organising the potential of its female subjects."<sup>12</sup> Yet he finds that "the appropriation of male identity is never sustainable; its anguished contradictions both tend initially to liberate her heroine from conventional constraints, and, eventually, ... lead her to submit to the undermining influence of the inconsistencies which her double life has engendered" (415). And critics such as Catherine Gallagher and Susan Wiseman have noted that Cavendish's investment in maintaining political absolutism (monarchy) leads to an inevitable support of the class system (even though it also reveals that system as unstable). Gallagher, for example, writes that "the ideology of absolute monarchy" (which implies a subsequent aristocratic system) "provides ... a transition to an ideology of the absolute self" (25). Wiseman notes that "the right to power, for women in Cavendish's writing, is a privilege attendant upon birth and status" (175),

which means that “she wishes to support the idealized class order” (177). This leaves intact the ideological site of marriage as a determiner of class status (which is exactly how marriage is consistently used in Cavendish’s plays).

Without exception, every published play of Cavendish’s is concerned primarily with marriage. Each of her comedies ends with somewhere between one and ten marriages, and often those marriages collect around issues of class, among them: status, wealth, property, jointure, and reputation. Even plays that develop their heroines apart from their wooers or spouses end up still circling the issue of marriage. In *Bell in Campo* (1662), for example, where the women decide to help their husbands fight the war by creating their own amazon army, there are two competing models of wifehood, Lady Victoria and Lady Jantil. The Ladies Sanspareile and *Innocence of Youth’s Glory and Death’s Banquet* (1662) die before they can be married, though both of their funerals appear in the same manner as weddings. As I suggested in chapter one, Sanspareile’s strong attitudes toward marriage (she insists on choosing her own husband) and her desire to speak publicly (she gives lectures to the learned scholars of the community) can lead only to her death. With marriage, then, comes a sense of the class appropriateness of the match, though this is certainly more pronounced in some plays than others. Dramatic marriages are a conventional way of providing comic resolution and naturalizing ideology (at the same time, Cavendish’s tragedies are domestic tragedies, with marriage or the lack of it the site of the tragic). Marriage also expresses a socio-economic relationship as part of its ideological function.

While Cavendish’s female characters don’t usually marry expressly for money, wealth, or status, it always turns out that the characters they marry

have money anyway, whether it is known during courtship or not. No aristocratic woman in Cavendish's plays really ever marries a poor man. The most spectacular instance of this, one I allude to in chapter one, occurs in *The Publick Wooing* (1662) with Lady Prudence's choice of the Stranger to be her husband. As it turns out, of course, the Stranger is a very handsome, very wealthy Prince, which Prudence knows only after she has actually married him. Two gentlemen, talking toward the end of the play, reveal the Prince's intent: "for the better trial of her Virtue, he wooed her in his disguised, deformed shape, and unknown quality, lest his Dignity and VVealth might have inticed her Ambition, and not his Merit, to have won her Love, or his Person might have catch'd her Eye, but not his Love her heart" (414). The symbolic capital of virtue as mutually exclusive from material goods is here appropriately converted into wealth. Disguise in the case of the Stranger is not a means by which a social stricture is transgressed, but, rather, a liminality through which a standard of class is revealed, articulated, and normalized. Victor Turner writes that in the liminality of social elevation, "the system of social positions is not challenged":

The gaps between the positions, the interstices, are necessary to the structure. If there were no intervals, there would be no structure, and it is precisely the gaps that are reaffirmed in this kind of liminality. The structure of the whole equation depends on its negative as well as its positive signs. Thus, humility reinforces a just pride in position, poverty affirms wealth, and penance sustains virility and health. (201)

The gap of the Prince's identity as a Stranger "reinforces ... position ... [and] wealth." The affirmation of the social order is conveyed through the use of generic conventions of social status which in Cavendish's play is structured by marriage.

## Matrimonial Trouble

There are few clearer expressions of the way class and marriage are interdependent than in the first part of *The Matrimonial Trouble* (1662). Ostensibly about the various horrors of marriage, but with the ideal marriage (Lady Chastity and Lord Sage's) at the center of the play, there is always a concern for the appropriateness of the ten marriages it follows, often in terms of class. There are two plot lines I would like to discuss in this section; both are concerned with the consequences of unequal marriage matches in terms of class, and in fact both work together to provide closure to the first part of the play (it is a two-part play; each part is 5 acts). Briget Greasy, Sir John Dottard's kitchen maid, has been upset by a virulent encounter with the household's Steward, and she weeps in the kitchen. When Dottard finds out the reason for her distress, he vows to turn out his Steward, telling Greasy "thou shalt be preferr'd to a higher Office" (425) than the kitchen. The Steward of the house links her servant status with filth, and with promiscuous sexuality:

you are a slut, and did not take all the dung out of [the guts for puddings] nor wash, nor scrape, nor cleanse them as they should have been; .... besides, your sluttery is such, as you will poyson all the House: for in one place I find a piece of butter, and a greasie comb, full of nitty hairs lying by it; and in another place flour and old-worn stockings, the feet being rotted off with sweat; ... by your carelessness you do waste and spoil so much, as it is unsuffereable. (424)

Steward Trusty paints a vivid picture of a careless worker whose lack of pride in herself shows in the way the kitchen is run and impinges on the rest of the household. He yokes her household occupation and her uncleanness while alluding to her sexual promiscuity with the efficient pun on "slut."<sup>13</sup> Her name becomes permanent and pervasive--the kitchen is as she is, unkempt

and greasy. When Dottard chooses to marry Greasy, we are set up to see his name as an accurate signifier of his ability to choose a desirable marriage partner.

While neither Greasy nor Dottard appear again, two maids of the house inform the audience of their evolving relationship. It is important that Greasy's social climb is reported by her peers: they offer us a critique of her mobility from their perspective as members of the same class. The first maid complains that "Briget is so proud since she is preferr'd to be my Masters Laundry-maid, as she will touch none but my Masters linnen" (427). The other maid agrees with her:

She is become very fine upon her preferment: I am sure it is not five or ten pound wages that will or can maintain her at that rate she goes: for she hath had, to my knowledge, two new pair of shooes within three weeks of each other .... for she us'd to send her shooes to be cobled three or four times over, and her wastcoat to be patch'd, and her petticoats to be new-border'd, and her stockings to be heel'd, as the rest of us did; and I knew of no Lands that had befallen her, and therefore she may doe the same still. (427)

The maids record her reluctance to live as she used to, even though she is still a member of the serving class as they are --in fact, the second maid muses that her raise isn't enough to make a real difference. Her "preferment" leads Greasy to pride in her appearance in order to appear as a member of a class when she isn't. But the maids consider the use of goods as symbolic captial to indicate class difference. The second maid even distinguishes between those who have land and "the rest of us" who must use goods over and over rather than buying new products. When Dottard has married Greasy, the maids marvel that money and honesty have changed her appearance: "'Tis no wonder that Briget Greasie is so proud now, being married to my Master, he having made her a Lady, Lord, Lord, to see the fortune that some have over

others: Lord, what Wealth and Honour will do! for now she is a Lady, she looks as if she never wash'd a dish, or scour'd a kettle or spit" (434). Her new appearance—thanks to her new title and the "Wealth and Honour" that come with it—does not betray her class origins; she is "a Lady" now and her appearance is consonant with her title.

But in the context of the play, the reader sees that this sort of marriage is detrimental, indicated by, if nothing else, John Dottard's name and the fact that he is "stupid" enough to marry an unchaste, dirty, and proud servant woman (he knows that she was unchaste before he marries her). Greasy is the humble laborer in the palace, but she does not gain social status because her servant status is not a liminal identity. Her class pretension does not win her a sympathetic read from her social peers, nor from the convention that ends the play. The reader's reception of the class inequities of the Greasy/Dottard marriage is influenced by the happy resolution of the first part of the play.

The second plot I consider is also about marrying out of one's class, but affords us the perspective of class relationships from the other end of the hierarchy. After the death of Lord Widower's wife, he decides that his daughter, Lady Sprightly, needs advice on running the household. He gives this task to Dol Subtilty, the housemaid. But Sprightly is upset that she has to be ordered about by a servant, even though Subtilty is portrayed as level-headed and indeed, a good advice-giver. The final straw for Sprightly, though, is the rumor that her father is to marry Subtilty. Therefore, she confronts her father, determined to make him see the error of his ways: "'Tis said you are married to my Chamber-maid Dol Subtilty." Her father answers:

Perchance I am.

*Sprightly.* Then I desire your Lordship will let me marry too.

*Widower.* VVith all my heart, and I shall do my part towards thy

mariage; but to whom would you be married?

*Sprightly.* Your Butler Sir.

*Widower.* Out upon thee base Girl, would you marry a Tapster?

*Sprightly.* Why Sir, a Tapster is as good as a piss-pot emptier; besides, they say you have done the fellow wrong: for she (they say) was his by promise, and if Conscience hath right, he ought to have her; and perhaps, did not Ambition come in the way, Affection might prevail: wherefore to gratifie him, you ought in justice to bestow me upon him.

*Widower.* Well, because you shall not marry my Butler, I will not marry your Maid: for the truth is, I never had so low a thought. (456)

His “low” “thought” could be construed as his realization through her admonition that he ought not take someone away from a lover if they are already promised. But it also refers to the lowness of the match, indicated by his declaration “you shall not marry my Butler,” an indictment based on class, especially as the servant’s names aren’t used; rather, they are designated by their duties as servants (tapster, piss-pot emptier). Widower, upon seeing her plan, calls her a “base girl”—“base” being an accusation of her deceit, and her desire (albeit feigned) to marry someone below her. This particular plot ends happily, with father and daughter reconciled and both potential marriages quickly revoked. This reconciliation scene valorizing class difference concludes the first part of the play. Strikingly, the dramatis personae list for the second part of *The Matrimonial Trouble* replicates the list for the first part, with the exception of the characters from the two plotlines I have just described. Therefore, the two plots that have to do with class inequity are easily reconciled, both of them to the same conclusion: it is not fruitful to marry outside one’s class. Indeed, the realization of that problematic before the marriage has occurred, as in Widower and Sprightly’s case, is enough to provide closure to the play and maintain its genre as a comedy.<sup>14</sup> When comic resolution is assured by an affirmation of the social



order, as in *Sprightly* and *Widower's* cases, then *Dottard* and *Greasy's* marriage appears to be another of the negative examples of marriage in the play.

### Fixing the Social Order

If *Greasy* is the Pretender to the palace, and if *Sprightly* is the aristocrat saved from permanent residence in the humble cottage, then *Madame Impoverished* in Cavendish's *Scenes* (1668)<sup>15</sup> is associated with the liminal humble cottager through her temporary station as a servant. The resolution of the play depends on her demonstration of her value and virtue while poor. Her speech I consider below represents a crystallized version of class structure found also in the 1662 folio and is in fact dependent on a particular notion of authority in both folios, a point on which I will end the chapter. *Madame Impoverished* gives a long speech during which she presents a distilled hierarchical vision of the whole society based on the various functions of social positions. Her speech is prompted by a discussion of marriage. She concludes her speech by equating herself with the humble cottager as shorthand for her liminal social position. Predictably, her virtue, like *Prudence's* and like *Poor Virtue's*, wins her a wealthy husband.

*Scenes* tells the story of *Underward* and his younger brothers and sisters, all of whom have been left poor by their parents' death. Since they now have no money or prospects, *Underward* encourages his siblings to live however they can, by being "industrious Pimps, nimble Pickpockets, cheating Shirks, and courageous Robbers" (101), but his siblings object to living "basely" (101). *Madam Impoverished*, *Underward's* oldest sister, finds employment as a servant to a lady. Her Lady's brother, *Monsieur Lover*, tries to seduce her,

but Impoverished tells him that she could be only a "Matrimonial Lover" (122). Sparked by Lover's assertion that he could not marry her because she is a servant, Impoverished launches into a long speech about class difference and the conditions of marriage. She asserts that everyone is a servant for some reason, "by Nature, Fortune, Opinion, Necessity, or Supreme power; we are Slaves to the Pleasure of our Sences; to the pains and sickness of our Bodies; to the passions of our Minds; to the necessities of Poverty; to humane Laws; to the motions of Time; to the Conveniency of Place; to the change of Chance; to the decrees of Fate; to the frowns of Fortune" (122). She uses "slavery" to include everyone, for every possible reason, equating "the necessities of Poverty" with "the Pleasure of our Sences." But Lover, affronted by her categorization of even him as a servant, asserts that "some are more noble Slaves than others" (123). Her answer again levels notions of who stands as a slave, asserting that "Those are as much enslaved that are tyed with Golden Chains, as with those of Iron; or whipt with silken Cords, as with those of Hemp, if they are as strong to restrain them, or so knotty that the smart may keep them in awe" (123). She also claims that "Gentlemen and Women who have low Fortunes," such as herself, who "serve those that are rich in Possessions, or great Titles, or powerful or meritorious Persons" are actually "an honour to those persons they serve, and ought not to be thought the worse for serving of them, but to be the more esteemed; otherwise, they do not only disgrace those that serve them; but they disgrace themselves by undervaluing their services, as the truth is, most do" (123). Impoverished's construction here goes beyond levelling differences and actually reverses them: rather than being thought of as low, servants should be "the more esteemed" whereas their masters, through "undervaluing their services" "disgrace themselves."

But this particular class vision does not last long in her speech. She talks about the purpose and place of each segment of society, starting at the top, with the royalist assertion that the aristocracy serves as the site from which to glorify the king: "all Noble Mens Houses are, or should be superintendent Courts, not only to entertain the Kingdom with Sports and delights, and to teach them Civility, and courteous Behaviour; but to shew the Honour and Magnificence of the Kingdom, to awe others, and keep up their own Dignity, and by that the Royalty" (124-5). The verbs she uses to express the responsibilities of "Noble Mens Houses" are all active; they will "entertain ... teach ... shew ... awe ... and keep up," thus serving as an indicator for the ruling class: "and *by that* the Royalty." The upper classes, in this vision, produce and indicate the passive royalty. The other result of her explanation of how the "upper" classes work is a continued "difference betwixt the Peasantry, and the Gentry; for as the Nobility depend upon the Crown, and the Crown is upheld by the Nobility, so the Gentry upon the Nobility, and Nobility by the Gentry; which three parts joyn'd, is the Noble half of the Kingdom" (125).

As she describes the "other half" of society, Impoverished uses the body as an organizing metaphor, ascribing different parts different hierarchical places and responsibilities:

the Citizens, Yeomandry and Handicrafts-Men, or Labourers, are the other half; this half is from the Wast downward, the other from the Wast upward: The King is the head, the Nobles are the heart, the Gentry the Armes; the Head to direct, the Heart to assist, the Armes to defend; the Head is the Seat of Justice, the Heart the Magazine of Counsel, the Armes the force of Power. (125)

But the "other half," far from being "the more esteemed," as the earlier part of her speech would suggest, are manual laborers with Platonic appetites.

She reiterates their position in the body before she states their responsibilities: "the other half is from the Wast downwards, the Citizens are as the Belly which devour all, the Labourers the Feet to transport all" (125). The importance of this exact metaphor of the body, and of the responsibilities of that body allows Impoverished to state the operation and maintenance of social order. While she is clear to show how all the parts of the body (classes) are dependent on each other, she also clearly hierarchalizes them. Here, the sentiment of equality comes back to her speech, since she denotes the ways that each segment must play its role well or else the "body" (the social order) will collapse:

if the Head be distempered with Simplicity, or distracted with Extravagancy, or akes with Tyranny; or the Heart sick with Treason, or hot with Malice, or cold with Envy, or hath the passion of Covetousness; or if the Armes be broke with Cowardise, or weak with Debauchery; the Belly straight swells with Hydropical faction, and breaks into Rebellion; the thighs and feet become weak with Famine, and full of the scurvy of disorder: Thus, if the Head be not wise, the Heart honest, the Armes strong, the rest of the Common-wealth is soon brought to ruine; And if the Emperor affronts the Nobility by disrepects, or neglects; and the Nobility strives to disgrace the Gentry: Royalty, Nobility, and Gentry will soon fall down; Also, if Kings slight their Noblest Servants, and the Nobility slights the Right Worshipful Servants, their own Honour and Respect will soon decay. (125-6)

Her speech seems at points to level class distinctions by categorizing each segment's particular, dependent function and corresponding part of the body. But in doing so, she taxonomizes the different parts of the society along class lines. The dependence of each on the others also implies the fixity of that hierarchy. Each part is necessary for the maintenance of the status quo, which means that there will always be a hierarchy, and there will always be a serving class at the bottom of that hierarchy. In Impoverished's vision, each part of the hierarchy is necessary so that the entire order is maintained. Therefore,

the humble cottager is an integral part of the class ordering, according to *Impoverished*.

To conclude her speech, *Impoverished* comes back to her own place in this structure; but her place is one that has not yet been outlined, because it blurs the very clear boundaries that she has set up. Her poverty disengages her class status from easy classification. Addressing again Lover's refusal of marriage because of her servitude, she says, "as I am a Gentlewoman born, and bred, although I am poor, yet I am an equal match, for any person, of what Dignity, Wealth, Power, or Authority whatsoever, and as I am virtuously Chast, I am not to be despised by the most Heroick Spirit" (127). Her status as Gentlewoman, complete with and signified by the symbolic capital of her chastity makes her a compatible match despite a lack of wealth. She takes up the metaphor of the noblewoman in the humble cottage in order to defend her own virtue and her *true* nobility. She tells Lover, who had prompted her long speech by denigrating her status as a servant: "I believe you are a person so wise, and have so much worth, as ... [not] to discredit my birth for being a Servant; 'tis true, if my Birth and Breeding, had been as low as my Fortunes, you might have rejected me as for a Wife, by reason the Qualities and Natures of mean Persons are most commonly accordingly, having as vulgar Souls as Births" (126). She rejects money as a marker of status (a rejection that is itself a marker of status); her nobility nullifies her poverty and also vilifies those who are also poor but lacking nobility—she posits that they have "vulgars Souls" to complement their "vulgar Births." Born into the "upper half," then, *Impoverished* has a certain interest in constructing society with the body metaphor. But she defines for herself a position outside of her hierarchy, though still using the terms of that hierarchy. She insists that "sometimes Merit is found in a poor Cottage, and

those that have noble Souls are to be preferred before those of Honourable Birth; for they descend from the gods, whose Essence is infused into the purest Substance of the Nature" (126). She then returns to her classifications of the tiers of society: "as the Gentry are spurred with Ambition to maintain the Honour of their Ancestors, by Virtuous, Noble, and Heroick Precepts, (for Gentry is derived from the root of Merit) so the brood of the Vulgar for the most part lies in the same litter, mire, kennel, or dunghill as their Parents did" (127). Like nobility, poverty is also an inherited condition which further stabilizes the social order and negates social mobility: the "Vulgar" cannot escape the conditions under which they are born. Impoverished uses this to lend credibility to her own position because she can't escape her own breeding, just as they cannot escape theirs, thereby reifying the fixed nature of the social structure. The difference is that she is noble, and even though she is poor, her poverty is only a liminal moment meant to guarantee her aristocracy.

What becomes clear from Impoverished's speech is exactly what Lover claims: that some slaves *are* more noble than others. Gentry who serve the aristocracy are still "noble" but the wage-labor class isn't ennobled in their position as the feet of the rest of the nation. That this stability of societal relations is prompted by a discussion of marriage means that it is in those terms that Impoverished recognizes herself as a member of society. As she tries to articulate her place in the vision she has just outlined, she is either a liminal servant or a poor but noble potential wife, whose poverty is easily rectified through marriage to a rich man. Her oratory pays off because Lover recognizes the veracity of her assertions about nobility, and happily impressed by her eloquence and learning, insists that he "must Marry her, although thrifty discretion forbids the Banes" (127). The next-to-the-last scene of the

play reveals that they are indeed married, and Impoverished refers to him as “a rich and gallant Man” (150). The fruition of Impoverished’s liminal status is signified by its reunification with wealth and status.

## II. Liminal Poverty

Madame Impoverished in *Scenes* is a template for the type of heroine generally represented in Cavendish’s plays. She is the chaste, pure, and virtuous woman of seventeenth-century literary convention. But unlike Musella, whose reward is true love in marriage, Impoverished is rewarded by wealth in marriage. A similar character to Impoverished in Cavendish’s 1662 folio of plays is Lady Poor Virtue, whose plea for humility and virtue opened this chapter. An additional element appears in Poor Virtue’s story: her pointed juxtaposition with a character who is a farm laborer. The sexual promiscuity of this laborer, Mall Mean-bred, throws into relief Virtue’s virtue. But it also makes it clear the difference between the liminal farm worker and the permanent one. Through the conventional representation of Poor Virtue, and through the invocation of the Duke, Cavendish’s husband, *The Lady Contemplation* creates a version of authority that is integral to the representation of authorship constituted in the prefatory materials of the folio in which it is printed.

*The Lady Contemplation* has three separate plotlines, all of which culminate in weddings of the main characters in each plot. Each plot contains two contrasting women—each of whom marries an appropriate suitor in the end. The first plot fittingly contrasts the Lady Contemplation, a daydreamer, with the social and talkative Lady Conversation. The second plot involves Lady Ward, a young orphan contracted to marry Lord Courtship. She is

taught to be licentious by Courtship's mistress, Lady Amorous, but Ward's sense of virtue and chastity wins over Courtship, and he forgoes Amorous to vow love to Lady Ward. The third plotline is the one that I focus on in this section, even though all three plots fit together and resonate with the issues of class and marriage that I will analyze here. In this final plotline, Lady Virtue is contrasted with Mall Mean-bred, whose name, like Rustick's, announces her rank. It also conflates her sexual propensity with her status, since Mall is slang for prostitute.<sup>16</sup> Similar to Briget Greasy in *The Matrimonial Trouble*, Mall's reputation and status are immediately available and fixed through her naming. In order to show the extent of the contrast between Virtue and Mean-bred, I analyze the scenes they have with each of the gallants who try to seduce them. In their reactions to those men, their use or withholding of sexuality is encoded as a classed expression.

Like "Mall Mean-bred," Virtue's name functions as an automatic signifier of her character. She is called "Lady Virtue" in the list of actors, but from her first scene, she is listed in the stage directions as "Poor Virtue." The substitution of "Lady" with "Poor" shows that her poverty negates her status; but at the end of the play, she is "Lady Virtue" again, thanks to her fortunate marriage. In the beginning of the play, she is mourning the death of her father. His lands and moneys have been confiscated in a battle which is the reason for her poverty. Her governess complains that her crying is motivated by her new-found poverty, not by the loss of her father: "Methinks the greatest cause you have to weep, is, for the loss of your Estate, which the Enemy hath seized on, and you left only to live on Charity" (185). But Virtue does not mourn the loss of property; her refusal to invest in material wealth will become one of her defining characteristics. She tells her governess that Fortune (the fickle goddess)



has power on nothing but base dross, and outward forms, things moveable; but she hath neither power on honest hearts, nor noble Souls; for 'tis the Gods infuse grace, and virtue; nor hath she power or Reason, or Understanding, for Nature creates, and disposes those; nor she govern Wisdome, for Wisdome governs her; nor hath she power on Life and Death, they are decreed by Heaven. (185)

Virtue is not “base,” “outward,” or “moveable,” but is rather ordained and protected by the force that controls Fortune, in order that it does not succumb to trials. And sure enough, Virtue’s character depends on adherence to this particular understanding of virtue as an invisible, untouchable good. In order to maintain her virtue, she becomes a farm laborer—a humble cottager.

Poor Virtue is set up by her new masters specifically as a contrast to Mall Mean-bred. In the following exchange, Farmer and Huswife discuss the good example her virtuous “industry” sets for Mall:

*Maudlin Huswife.* Truly Husband our Maid *Poor Virtue* is a very industrious Servant as ever I had in my life.

*Roger Farmer.* Yes wife, but you were angry with me at first because I perswaded you to take her.

*Maudlin Huswife.* Why, she seem’d to be so fine a feat, as I thought she would never have settled to her work.

*Roger Farmer.* Truly Wife, she does forecast her business so prudently, and doth every thing so orderly, and behaves her self so handsomely, and carryes her self so modestly, as she may be a Pattern to our Daughter. (196)

The idea that Virtue should be a pattern for Mean-bred is ironic: Virtue is a woman who, because of her virtue, is a better farm worker than people who actually work on the farm. Being a farm worker (a similar mystification of social relations not unlike pastoral’s love of the humble shepherd<sup>17</sup>) would be the most preferable way to live one’s life in poverty. Even though they were skeptical at first about a “fine” woman doing agricultural labor, Farmer ends up insisting that their daughter should be like her, while Huswife disagrees, pointedly reversing Farmer’s suggestion by claiming “I am a better Pattern my

self" (196). The ensuing plot sets up a choice of which pattern to follow: does one follow the pattern set by the class one is born into, or does one follow virtue? Mall does not (indeed, cannot) move out of her class (though she desires to do so), and neither does Virtue (her moment of liminality is only temporary). The implication is that the class hierarchy is strategically fixed, as in *Madame Impoverished's* bodily metaphor of the social order.

The contrast between Mall and Poor Virtue is played out in their alternating conversations with three gallants—Lord Title, Sir Effeminate Lovely, and Sir Golden Riches—who are trying to find pretty country wenches to "court" (194). Their names are perhaps self-explanatory. Lord Title is the most "noble" of the three. He is distinguished from the other two by his double-titling—he is a Lord (the others are Sirs) and his name itself is Title. Unlike the other two, his name does not point to anything materially present. Sir Effeminate Lovely is a fop who dresses in elaborate finery and solicits flattery in an attempt to seduce with his goods whomever he meets. Golden Riches is like Mall in that his name makes his class standing (in terms of wealth) fixed and immediately available to the reader. As the gallants enter the countryside, they meet Tom Purveyer. As his names suggests, his merchandise is country wenches—he is a sort of pimp who agrees to procure women for the gallants. In succession, Poor Virtue and Mall Mean-bred separately come across each of the three gallants. In her position as the pattern for Mall, Poor Virtue meets each of the "suitors" first. The men try to seduce each of the women, and while Poor Virtue will have none of them, Mall Mean-bred agrees to sexual liaisons with all three. Virtue and Mall's contrasting reactions are coded as conditions of their contrasting classes.

In his first meeting with Poor Virtue, Lord Title is struck by the incongruity of her apparent social position and her virtues. Thinking that he

seduces a common country girl, Lord Title suggests that he wants to attend her with "loving thoughts, that feed on kisses sweet, folded in amorous arms" (196). But Virtue refuses, claiming that "My mind never harbors wanton thoughts, nor sends immodest glances forth, nor will infold unlawful love ...; I am as constant to Chastity, as truth to Unity, and Death to life; for I am as free, and pure from all unchastity as Angels are of sin" (196). She shows in her response her recognition that her one material good—her virginity—is that which guarantees (and also acts as) the symbolic capital of her virtue and purity. She abruptly leaves him alone onstage to react to her refusal. He says: "I wonder not so much at Fortunes gifts, as Natures curiosities, not so much at Riches, Tittle and power, as Beauty, VVit, and Virtue, joyn'd in one; besides, she doth amaze me by expressing so much learning, as if she had been taught in some famous Schools, and had read many histories, and yet a Cottager, and a young Cottager, tis strange" (196-7). Lord Title, we see, is predisposed to read her for her virtues, and to wonder at them combined in a "Cottager." He identifies these virtues as being out of line for the class that she appears to be; he is incredulous that she is a cottager. While Lord Title will try again to seduce her, he continues to be baffled by her virtue.

Sir Effeminate Lovely does not read her virtue as dissonant with her social class—he thinks merely that she is being unnecessarily coy. Unlike Title, he shows himself to be a poor reader of her quality; thus, a contrast is set up between Lovely and Title. Lovely tries to get Poor Virtue to succumb to him by tempting her to admire his clothing: "Fair Maid, stay and look upon my person" (200), but she is unimpressed, insisting that he is "vain and self-conceited," "a pencilled Picture" (200). Virtue is not swayed by his visual signs of wealth. Their exchange in this scene shows Lovely trying to trick

Virtue into sex through verbal (but not soundly logical) wit. For example, he tells her that "If you admire [works of nature], you will admire me, and if you admire me, you will yield to my desires" (200). But Virtue doesn't fall for his specious logic. She tells him, "There may be admiration without love, but to yield to your desires, were to abuse Nature's Works" (200), chiding him that he isn't following his conscience by trying to seduce her. He answers that he doesn't have a conscience, and she quips, "That is, by reason the Fire of unlawful Love hath drunk all up, & seared the Conscience dry" (200). She thwarts every verbal turn he takes. But Lovely tries one more time: "You may call it what Fire you will, but I am certain it is your Beauty that kindles it, and your Wit that makes it flame, burning with hot desires" (200) to which she appropriately responds "Pray Heaven my Virtue may quench it out again" (200), leaving him alone the way she leaves Lord Title. But rather than wondering at her virtue, Lovely dastardly vows "self-satisfaction" (200).

If there's any chance that Virtue is truly lamenting her lost properties, or if she truly was a poor shepherdess, then it would seem that Sir Golden Riches would tempt her most of the three gallants. But she puts him off as handily as she does the other two. To his promise of a fortune, Virtue claims, "I am Fortune proof Sir, she cannot tempt me" (204). He offers her gifts instead, which she refuses. Riches admonishes her: "you ought not to deny all gifts, for there are gifts of pure affection, Love-gifts of Charity, gifts of Humanity, and gifts of Generosity" (204). But Virtue sees through his ploy:

They are due debts, and not gifts; For those you call gifts of pure Love, are payments to dear deserving friends; and those of Charity are payments to Heaven; and those of Humanity are payments to Nature, and those of Generosity, are payments to Merit; but there are vain-glorious gifts, covetous gifts, gifts of fear, and gifts that serve as Baits to corrupt foolish young Virgins .... I am so virtuous as not to take them. (204)

She leaves the scene, and, unlike Title and Lovely, Riches has nothing further to say, which signals the extent to which their value systems do not mingle—he is speechless.

While Poor Virtue withstands the seduction of rank, finery, and wealth, it soon becomes clear that Mall has no such virtue. Mall's mistakes can't be accorded to her naivety, because she appears quite worldly. She is clearly swayed by rank: she would not dream of refusing Lord Title because of his nobility; she is seduced by Lovely's dress, but she renounces both of them for the promises of Riches' riches. At first, she is intimidated by Title's title. When he asks her (perhaps impertinently) if she loves him, she answers "I am so ashamed to love a Lord forsooth that I know not how to behave my self" (199). He kindly offers to teach her, claiming that "it will be both for my Honour; and my pleasure; and the pleasure of my Honour" (199). Title conflates masculine honor with pleasure, suggesting that his "Honour" is increased through sexual conquest. He also insinuates that it will be pleasurable for her to experience his "Honour." After he kisses her, she is converted to a taste for nobility and title, and exclaims "I see there is no denying a Lord, forsooth it is not civil, and they are so peremptory too, the Gods blesse them, and make them their Servants" (199). When Mall seems persuaded by him, he moves in for the kill: "This kisse hath so inflamed me, therefore for Loves sake, meet me in the Evening, in the Broom close here" (199). Mall, who had at first acted very "*nice and coy*" (stage direction) with him, now answers, "I know the Close forsooth, I have been there before now" (199). Her lines show that she is not as "coy" as she had appeared to be.

Whereas Virtue saw Lovely's potential gifts as "debts" that would have to be repaid sexually, Mean-bred sees sex as a way to participate in Lovely's goods. Lovely is more pointed with Mall than he was with Virtue. He tells

her that he would like to enjoy her, and she appropriately answers: “enjoy is a naughty word forsooth” (203). After puns on her modesty that Mall does not understand—he refers to her as “mincing” (coy), to which she answers “I love whole joints without mincing”—he says, “Why then in plain *English*, I would have your Maidenhead” (203). She says “O dear, how will you get it, can you tell? Truley, truely, I did not think such naughty words would come forth of so fine a Gentlemans mouth” (203). But he is unconcerned by her chiding and after cajoling her again, she says “You will make me blush now, and discover all; so fine cloaths ... your Hat hid with so fine a Feather, our Peacocks tailles are not like it; and then your hair so long, so finely curled, and powder’d in sweets, a sweeter Gentleman I never saw” (203). And after a rising frenzied catalogue of his clothing (the glory of which appears to have some bearing on her final answer to him), she says “My love’s beyond dissembling, so young, so fresh, so every thing, I warant you; O Sir, you will ravish me, but yet you cannot” (203). They agree to meet under the hedges, and she requests that he not betray her (204). While Mall does not deny being a virgin, she nevertheless evades a clear answer. When she asks how he will get her maidenhead, or when she claims that he will ravish her but that he cannot, she seems to be suggesting that she isn’t a maiden, or at least that she will not resist him. However, she is very willing to have sex when tempted by the wealth that finery signifies.

Lovely might use his clothing to tempt Mall, but it is Riches’ raw wealth in the form of money that Mall reads as closest to a way out of her current social status. Indeed, her conversation with Riches revolves around the efficacy of money—what it can accomplish for the person who controls it. When he tells her upfront, “I have no Sonnets, Songs, or stronger Lines, with softer Poesie to melt your Soul, nor Rhetorick to charm your Eares, or Logick

for to force, or ravish you, nor lap't in richer cloaths embalm'd in Sweets, nor Courtly Language; but am an Ancient Squire" (207), he would seem to be taking himself out of contention. But he knows the way to her heart: "look here my Wench, this purse is stuff'd with Gold, a hundred pounds" (207). She says, "Let me see, poure it on the ground" (207). The stage directions note that indeed "*He poures it on the ground*" (208) in an appropriately specular display of wealth, and she is awed: "O dear, how it doth shine forsooth! it almost blinds mine eyes; take it away, yet pray let it stay: truly I know not what to do with it" (208). But Riches has some idea what she could do with it; namely, she can turn into the spectre of wealth. He lists some of the (leisure) goods she could own: "it will buy you rich Gowns, ap'd in the Silk-worms toys, with stockings of the softer silk, to draw on your finer legs, with rich lace shoes, with roses that seem sweet, and garters laced with spangles like twinkling Stars, embalm your hair with *Gessimond Pomatums*, and rain Odoriferous Powders of proud *Rome*" (208). Mall takes this list as a promise, as their final scene together will reveal.

For the remainder of the scene, Riches and Mall glory in other ways to spend the money—she chiefly wants to make her friends jealous, a desire he is happy to facilitate. When she says that she wants to have a Mail-Pillion, he says "No, you shall ride in rich gilt Coaches, Pages and Lacquies in rich Liveries, with Gentlemen well cloath'd to wait upon you" (208). In deciding to be persuaded by riches, Mall sees a way out of her current social status: she muses that she will "be a Lady; then I will be proud, and will not know Thomas any more, nor any Maid that was acquainted with me ... I would so fain be a Lady, and it might be: I will be stately, laugh without a cause, and then I am witty, and jeer sometimes, and speak nonsense aloud" (208). Her view of the life of a lady shows how frivolous she would be, and she would

be able to leave behind her life of labor. When she expresses doubt that his one hundred pounds laying on the ground will be enough, he plays his trump card: "why then we will have hundreds and thousands of pounds, until you be pleas'd, so I may but enjoy you in my Arms" (208). Again, Mall shows her worldliness, and also her understanding of the worth of sex, by marking her class identity with her use of sex: "No Maid alive can hold out these Assaults, Gold is the Petarr that breaks the Virgins gates, a Souldier told me so. VVell then, my Lord *Title* , farewell, for you are an empty name; and Sir *Effeminate Lovely* , go you to your Taylor, make more fine cloaths in vain" (208). She ends the scene with a couplet yoking together sex and money:

*I'll stick to Riches, do then what you will,  
The nearest way to pleasure buy it still.* (208)

The purchase of pleasure works both ways: Riches spends his money to get her maidenhead (if she indeed has it still), and Mall spends her maidenhead (or sex in general) in order to have access to Riches' money. She believes that it will afford her social mobility, which is pleasureable to her; pleasure here is a product of both wealth and sex.

The difference between Mall and Virtue, as it is constructed in the play, is that their class difference is legible, not in their appearance, since they are both taken for land workers, but in conventional understandings of sexuality. The only variable in the contrast between Mall and Virtue is the way they react to sexual advances. What confuses Lord Title about Virtue's repudiation of his advance is that her sexual refusal marks her as a different (higher--aristocratic, even) class rather than available for purchase. Attitudes toward sex become a means by which the social formation of class can be constructed. In this play, for example, promiscuous female sexuality is



equated with a lack of breeding, while chastity is equated with virtue. Female sexuality is therefore properly deployed in marriage, according to seventeenth-century dominant discourse constructing the proper place of Woman. Virginity and faithfulness to one's husband is a social-patriarchal construct that legitimates primogeniture, land rule, and hereditary titles, all of which are important means by which class distinctions are enacted and legible (but only in the aristocracy). That Mall doesn't recognize chastity as symbolic capital serves to indicate her class status. Mall is ultimately seduced by a vision of material goods and social mobility, something that holds nothing for Poor Virtue in her liminality. Mall privileges real goods and the status they imply over her sexual purity. Virtue sees her sexual purity as itself a good.

The resolution of the play hinges on the rectification of Poor Virtue's social status. The appropriate match for Poor Virtue is Lord Title because through marriage he can replenish her status and her "title"--surface-level attributes she currently lacks. He no longer tries to only seduce her (though he still admits that he lusts for her); in fact, after she has resisted Lovely and Riches, he reappears to express concern about her melancholy, and when she insists she has to get back to work, he offers to help her. In a scene early in part two of the play, Virtue again meets him. "Why do you follow me so much" she asks him (214). "Is it that you think I have beauty? and is it that you are in love with? I am sure it cannot be my Vertue that inflames you to an intemperance; for Vertue is an Antidote against it" (214). She admits her love for him somewhat reluctantly, saying that "if your mind and soul were endued with noble qualities, and heroical vertues, I should sooner embrace your love, than to be Mistris of the whole World" (214). Title finds this laughable, and tells her, sounding like Monsieur Lover from *Scenes*, "You

cannot think I would marry you, although I would lie with you .... Thou art a mean poor wench, and I nobly descended" (214-15). He unambiguously asserts that it is their respective class differences that would discount any relationship (other than only sexual) between them, something he reiterates after she leaves the stage: "What pity it is Nature should put so noble a soul into a mean-born body" (215). As a "mean-born" woman, she has an exclusively sexual use value for him, dependent on her sexual availability. In the next scene, though, Title has decided that he cannot live without her, while Virtue maintains that he "torments" her (216). Their relationship cannot be resolved until Title discovers her noble birth.

This resolution occurs when Humanity appears to assure Title that Virtue's parents were "Lord *Morality*, and the Lady *Piety*" (234). Upon hearing of her noble birth, Title recognizes in an epiphany the reason for the apparent incongruities of her situation and her virtue. He exclaims, "her Beauty, Wit, and sweet Demeanour, declares her Noble Pedigree" (234). He therefore decides to marry her, and they admit their love for each other, with Virtue again qualifying her situation: "though I am poor, yet I am virtuous, and Virtue is to be preferr'd before Wealth or Birth" (240). Strikingly, at the first of this scene, she has already been transformed from *Poor* Virtue: the stage directions call her "Lady Virtue, *Cloathed like her Self.*" Her transformation occurs expressly for the scene during which Title admits his love for her. The stage directions also make clear that her *self* is Lady Virtue, not *Poor* Virtue as she has been until this point in the play.

The conclusion of the play thus brings reward to Virtue (marriage to Lord Title and a restoration of her title of "Lady Virtue") and also reward to Mall, but of the kind appropriate to her station, similar to the concession to Rustick of marriage to Dalina. The final scene of the play reveals that the

three gallants have each forsaken Mall. Mall breaks up the festivities following the wedding of Virtue and Title. She says "I am come here to complain of this Hog-grubber *Sir Golden Riches*, who did tempt me with Gold till he had his desire, you know all what it is, and I like an honest woman, as it were, kept my word, and performed truly as any woman could do" (245). Mall insists over and over that she is a true and honest woman, but we know that she isn't—she uses "honest" to refer to the fact that she kept her word and had sex with him, when that discounts her honesty (virginity). Her misuse of "honest" signifies a linguistic slippage consonant with her sexual promiscuity. Riches acts as though he never made her any promises, but Mall recounts for the wedding party their meeting and all the goods he promised her. Her social status, even though she has kept her promise and "cashed in" her sexual purity, has not changed. The goods he has given her aren't what she expected, and they argue about it, with Mall insisting she is "true" and Riches insisting he has given her what he has promised:

*Mall Mean-bred.* ... as I am a true woman, which he knows I am, I never had more than this white fustion wastecoa't, and three pence to buy me three penyworth of pins, for he would allow me no inkle to tie it withall, and this old stamel peticoat, that was his great Grandmothers in Eighty eight, I am no two-legg'd creature else.

*Sir Gold. Rich.* But I bought you velvet to gard it withall.

*Mall Mean-bred.* Yes, that's true, an old black velvet Jerkin without sleeves, that had belonged to one of Queen *Elizabeth* her learned Counsel in the Law of blessed Memory, *prime* of Her Reign, and you bought it of an old Broker at *Nottingham*; and as I am a true Christian woman, if our Neighbour Botcher cold almost sew it on, it was so mortified.

*Sir Gold. Rich.* I bought you shooes, and ribbons to tie them withall.

*Mall Mean-bred.* Look Gentlefolks, a pair of wet-leather shooes, that have given me a Cold, and two leather points that he calls ribbons, like a lying false man.

*Sir Gold Rich.* I am sure I bought you stockings and garters.

*Mall mean-bred.* Old *Doncaster*- stockins, that I was fain to wash my self with a little borrow'd sope, and they were footed with yellow

fustion too, and the garters he talks of were lists of cloth, which a Taylor gave me for my New-years-gift, and I cannot chuse but grieve to see his unkindnesse; I gave you satisfaction often, but you never satisfied me, I will take it upon my death. (245-6)

I cite this passage at length to show the importance of the meaning of the goods for establishing Mall's desire for social mobility. While Riches asserts that what he has done for her is enough, she is clear that the goods he has given her will not cause the social mobility that she so desires, even though she has fulfilled her side of the bargain--"often," even. She wants him to stand trial for going against his word, but the play constructs her as the legally offensive one: at Mall's heated insistence that "I will follow thee to Hell, but I will have something more out of thee than I have had, or else I will make all the Town ring of me" (246), Beadles appear onstage and Riches insists that they take her to prison. The threat of punishment is a conventional gesture for the "villain" of a comedy. Her transgressions are not limited to her sexual activity, but extend to her disruption of the wedding scene to argue about social goods.

Lord Title rescues her from prison and gives her away in marriage to Tom Purveyor (the "pimp"). Mall is a perfect choice of wife for him, as she has proven willing to prostitute herself. Title couches his rescue in magnanimous terms, representing himself as the wronged party, but willing to overlook it: "Mall, although you deceived me, and broke your promise, yet I will not only save you from the punishment you were to suffer at the Correction-house, but I will give thee a Husband here, lusty *Thom. Purveyor.*" Title also appears to offer financial assistance in the form of "a lease of fifty pounds a year. Here *Tom*, take her and go marry her" (246).<sup>18</sup> Mall exclaims "Heaven bless your Honor," and even Tom is pleased: "Come *Mall*, let us go Wed, for fifty pounds a year is better than thy Maiden-head"

(246). Money is more important here than sexual purity, and I would suggest that Tom's statement provides another wedge between Virtue and Mall. While for the "mean-born" class, "fifty pounds a year is better than thy Maiden-head," it has been clear in the course of the play that for the aristocracy, maiden-head is more important capital than any amount of money or finery.

One of the most striking details in Mall's seduction scenes with the three gallants is the representational confluence of agrarian class identity and promiscuous sexuality. The response to seduction is the defining difference between the Mall and Virtue—they are both farm laborers (for the time being), and they are both seduced by the same men in more or less the same way. Disguised as a country worker, Virtue is able to maintain her virtue. But she does so in spite of the apparent sexual requirements of country girls, suggested by the gallants on the prowl as well as by Mall's genial acceptance of their offers. The disguise of the cottager worn by the aristocratic woman in this play therefore does not enable Virtue to act like a cottager, but rather it intensifies her difference from actual cottagers, since it is only liminal. When Virtue is confronted with the same set of temptations as Mall, she makes the decisions that lead to a betterment of her social status, while Mall does not, even though she tries to become socially mobile. And the problem of disguise is always also a problem of reading the disguise; it is only Title who senses the dissonance between Virtue's behavior and her appearance.

Class identity is indicated through a fixed system of either expenditure or conservation of sexuality. Mall's pattern is set by her mother, and is represented as statically constitutive of her class. Even as a married woman, Maudlin Huswife speaks lasciviously, which is reminiscent of Mall's scenes with the gallants. When Lord Title comes to ask Farmer and Huswife for

Poor Virtue, Huswife spars with Title, exhibiting the same sexual laxity as her daughter. Farmer admonishes her to “wipe your lips Maudlin, and answer him every time that he moves thee, and give him as good as he brings” (236). Huswife answers “I’ll warrant you Husband, I’ll satisfie him.” And when Title addresses her as “Honest *Maudlin*, ” she says “That’s more than your Lordship knows.” He omits “Honest” and she says “That’s my name indeed” (236). She and Farmer both consider Virtue to be a detriment to their household, even as they admit to her usefulness around the farm. Farmer even complains that “I never was merry since she vvas in my house, the May-pole is dovvn since she came” (237)—a statement that again links sexual promiscuity with agrarianism. Therefore, they are happy that Title will take Virtue away (an allegorical reminder that sex and virtue don’t mix). Maudlin rejoices in the restoration of “poor folks” ways of acting:

now we shall be like our Neighbours again, we will not abate them an hair, the best in the Parish shall not live merryer than we will now for all Sports: Why, Vanity and Sin, Husband, is the Liberty of the Subject, and the seven Deadly Sins are the Fundamental Laws of the Kingdome, from the greatest to the least, if poor folks might have their right. (237)

Her blatant disregard for virtue or for social mobility—she desires to “be like our Neighbours again”—marks her as having the stereotypical characteristics of “poor folks.”

In *The Lady Contemplation*, class relationships are an interdependent system of fixed categories, as Madame Impoverished claims. Characters do not move out of their assigned class. When aristocratic female characters marry in Cavendish’s works, their status is raised, but not in terms of social mobility, which proves in this play to be a specious movement. Virtue’s status, for example, is *restored* to her through her marriage, which is as

much a movement *back* as it is up. Both *Impoverished in Scenes* and *Lady Virtue in The Lady Contemplation* have to serve as humble servants in order to protect their aristocratic class standing, an identity that is returned to them permanently in the resolution of the play.

### III. Interconvertibilities of Chastity

But there is an important detail about *The Lady Contemplation* I have left out until this point. In the play, five scenes are attributed to Cavendish's husband, the Duke (then Marquess) of Newcastle: each of Mall's seduction scenes, the scene in which Title asks Huswife and Farmer for Virtue, and most of the final wedding scene containing Mall's admission of her sexual liaisons with Riches. The text records in the same small italics used for stage directions, "My Lord Marquess wrote this scene" or "Written by my Lord Marquess of *New-castle*," or similar phrasing.<sup>19</sup> I suggest that whether these scenes were actually written by him or not is immaterial. What is important is that this textual detail exonerates Cavendish herself from writing those scenes. Instead, in choreographed counterpoint to the Duke's ribald scenes, Cavendish writes the lines of the chaste, virtuous Poor Virtue. The Duke's name is used as a flag--a visual exoneration of the female author of the plays, who remains outside these scenes. Her chastity is maintained by the text's absolution of her as even able to imagine Mall. In this way, through the apportionment of the scenes to the Duke, Cavendish can represent herself as a virtuous woman by the terms she establishes via *Lady Virtue* in the play. The *Lady Virtue's* speeches and her impeccable devotion to her own creed of virtue and purity show that chastity is more valuable than whatever it can be exchanged for. Because the exchange value of chastity is contrasted in the

play with the villainized exchange of sex for goods, and because the chaste scenes are attributed to the female author, the author-function is aligned with aristocratic virtue. Therefore, the text maintains the author's class position because of the way writing is apportioned throughout the play. Even the way that the scene attribution is phrased creates Cavendish as a good, virtuous (and submissive) wife: William Cavendish is always "my lord Marquesse."

The contrast between Mall's use of sex and Virtue's abstinence in the play is a salient signifier of the female characters' class difference. It is important that none of the men are chastized for their promiscuity; their class is not defined by their behavior. It is specifically only the female character's sexuality that indicates their status (and vice-versa). Lord Title can even complain at his wedding in front of the guests and his new wife that Mall did not keep her promise to have sex with him. He uses the fact that Mall rescinds her promise to underscore his generosity in keeping her out of jail. The male character can also be left unmarried at the end of the play (neither Riches nor Lovely marry); the women cannot. This double standard links with the fact that the Duke can write lascivious scenes; nothing is at stake for him in writing them.<sup>20</sup> But Cavendish's reputation and class status would be at stake. The scenes designating the authorship of the Duke are monuments to the Duchess' chastity, and an indicator and protector of her class status.

While Mall's feigned naivete is no match for the wiles and riches of the gallants, Virtue isn't tempted sexually or monetarily by them. Virtue insists over and over that her chastity is her most valuable possession; thus, the thing they want most is what she will not part with because of its value to her. She tells Lord Title in one of their later scenes together that "my chastity shall raise a Monumental Tomb over [her ancestor's] cold dead ashes" (215).



She uses this same metaphor with Golden Riches, who tries one last time to tempt her because he refuses to believe that a poor laborer can't be seduced by money. In the same way he succeeds in winning over Mall, Riches promises to "build thee Palaces of burnish'd gold, where thou shalt be worshipd whilest thou livest, and when thou diest, I will erect a Monument more famous than *Mausolus's* was" (233). But Virtue indignantly insists that

My Virtue shall build me a Monument far richer, and more lasting; for the materials with which it shall be built, shall be try'd Chastity, as pure Gold, and Innocency, as Marble white, and Constancy, as undissolving Diamonds, and Modesty, as Rubies red, Love shall the Altar be, and Piety, as Incense sweet, ascend to Heaven, Truth, as the Oil, shall feed the Lamp of Memory, whereby the flame of Fame shall never goe out. (233)

While Riches offers physical monuments to her in order that she will be treated like a god, Virtue's monument isn't made of purchasable goods. This distinction constructs virtue as an economically valuable good consisting of "try'd" chastity, constancy, and modesty. Her trials with the three gallants prove her retention of each of these, despite her trials with poverty and farm labor.

Therefore, in this play, chastity (and the class status it implies) becomes central to a series of interconvertibilities of capital. Writing about the use of symbolic capital in cultural and economic structures of exchange, Pierre Bourdieu argues that "the only way in which such accountancy [of symbolic exchanges] can apprehend the undifferentiatedness of economic and symbolic capital is in the form of their perfect interconvertibility."<sup>21</sup> One such instance of interconvertibility occurs when Virtue (symbolic capital) is rewarded with title and high social status (still symbolic capital) through her marriage, which gives her access to economic capital (wealth). That wealth, however, is still a form of symbolic capital as it enhances reputation and status, (both of which

are nevertheless convertible into economic capital). Another level of conversion occurs when the author-function is linked with the chastity of Poor Virtue: the textualized author-function puts Cavendish in a liminal position similar to Virtue's poverty, so that her own (textual) virtue and chastity operates as symbolic capital. The textual author of the folio is therefore a wife homologous to Virtue. For Cavendish the book writer, there is a (potential) material outcome of the value of her representation as a chaste author/wife (symbolic capital) in that it protects her status, and makes her book marketable (with a possibility of real capital). This construction is of course theoretical—I am positing the possible circulation of capitals as a potential effect, not necessarily a "real" one.

As my final section will show, the creation and selling of the book itself has the goal of fame (which is a pointed admission in the prefaces). Thus, another level of convertibility: if the author sells the book, she might gain economic capital, but that capital acts as evidence that her book has been read and guarantees her posterity, reputation, and fame, or, her work's efficacy as symbolic capital. Through economic capital that comes from the assurance that she is chaste (which, as I pointed out, has already apparently won her a wealthy husband), the symbolic capital of her fame as a writer is assured.

### Fame and Chastity

It is a standard move in criticism of Margaret Cavendish's canon to write about her construction of authority by using her many prefaces.<sup>22</sup> Jeffrey Masten's chapter on Cavendish in his study of collaboration in seventeenth-century play folios considers the means by which Cavendish constructs her own authority in the front matter of the 1662 folio. Most of her printed

volumes have prefaces written and initialled or signed by Cavendish ("MN"-Margaret of Newcastle), from her collections of poetry, her biography of her husband, her utopia *The Blazing World*, to *The Sociable Letters*. Masten notes that *Playes* has an unusual number of prefaces.<sup>23</sup> As Masten's book shows, the inclusion of many prefaces by the author is unusual in the context of other play folios which usually have prefaces and dedicatory poems written by people other than the author(s). Masten writes about Shakespeare's folio, Beaumont and Fletcher's folios, and writes of Cavendish as a "mistris corrivall"—a co-rival to these playwrights, and not a collaborator.<sup>24</sup> This author position is constructed "as a way to denigrate her precursors and elevate herself within the paradigm of singular authorship" (159). Masten concludes that "Cavendish's texts demonstrate the difficulty of locating a discourse in which women playwrights could write of writing in the seventeenth century" (162).

Gauging from the subplot of *The Lady Contemplation*, and from the prefatory materials of the 1662 folio, one of the first objections the folio must overcome is the question of its author's chastity and ensuing class status in light of her publication. Studies focusing on Cavendish's construction of authority often touch on the question of fame that Cavendish's characters and prefaces have as a goal. Jean Gagen is persuasive on the issue of fame and honor in Cavendish's works. She writes that "generally when the Duchess of Newcastle spoke of her longing for fame she used the word as a synonym for honor, in the sense of recognition and reward of actual merit."<sup>25</sup> In her works, Gagen argues, Cavendish makes "a unique attempt ... to see women, particularly herself, achieving in the great arena of the world those very honors which spurred many a Renaissance gentleman to heroic endeavour," (536), even though "the only type of 'fame' with which a woman was

supposed to be concerned was her reputation for virtue or chastity" (520). Hobby's assertion, then, that Cavendish's female characters have only two options, either to "stay within the bounds of private honour and chastity ... or ... to sally forth and seek public acclaim and fame"<sup>26</sup> is descriptive of the bind the characters find themselves in. But strategically, the author-function is able to combine both of these: it is precisely her "honour and chastity" that allows her to "sally forth." The author function appears clearly in the prefatory materials, as Masten deftly shows, but it also surfaces in the texts of the plays where the chaste female character is linked with the cottager by the means of their insularity, and their industrious, appropriate labor, as I have shown. By setting the front matter alongside *The Lady Contemplation*, I will show that MN's construction of herself as a singular author reveals not ambivalence on her part or a discursive difficulty, as Masten concludes, but a strategy for maintaining her chastity.

MN intimates in her several letters to the Readers that she indeed considers writing to be labor. She informs her reader that she writes for the purpose of "imploying" her time and for creating pleasure in her readers: "*The chief Plots of my Playes were to imploy my idle time .... if they find my Playes neither Edifying, nor Delightfull, I shall be sorry; but if they find either, I shall be pleased, and if they find both, I shall much rejoyce, that my time hath been imployed to some good use*" (A5/2r<sup>27</sup>). The positive reception of the plays validates the time she has spent on them. The ability to encode writing as employment becomes even more striking as one reads through the prefatory materials.

The eighth preface (addressed to the "worthy readers" rather than "noble readers" as are the other ten) makes explicit connections between the work of writing and others' labor:

*I have heard that such Poets that write Playes, seldome or never join or sow the severall Scenes together; they are two severall Professions, at least not usual for rare Poets to take that pains; like as great Taylors, the Master only cuts out and shapes, and his Journy-men and Apprentices join and sow them together; but I like as a poor Taylor was forced to do all my self, as to cut out, shape, join, and sow each severall Scene together, without any help or direction; wherefore I fear they are not so well done but that there will be many faults found; but howsoever, I did my best indeavours, and took great pains in the ordering and joining thereof, for which I hope my Learned Readers will pardon the errors therein, and excuse me the worker thereof. (A5/2v)*

Laura J. Rosenthal writes incisively about the beginning of this passage: “the duchess insists upon her own originality, supported by a combination of class privilege and gendered modesty, as a strategy for owning literary property, which in turn provides a strategy for constructing full social subjectivity”<sup>28</sup> In asserting herself as “me the worker” MN marks herself as a different class than the “great Taylors,” who have workers to finish the creative process. But as a “poor Taylor,” the author must follow the entire writing process through without help from apprentices. The passage constructs two different social labor relationships and privileges one over the other. The writer of the folio aligned with the singular “poor Taylor” which is categorized as less desirable than the other.

Masten investigates exactly this construction of a singular authority in Cavendish’s folio. He does not include any analysis of the plays themselves, focusing instead on the notion of authority established in the prefatory materials and his reading of them as the teleological endpoint of his study on dramatic collaboration. In the passage above (while it is not one that Masten considers), it is clear that one mode of production is a collaborative one in which tailors, apprentices, and journeymen work together to create a product, while the other is not. In this context, *Playes* appears then to establish MN

as a singular writer, since the author is aligned with the “poor Taylor” who has no help with the creative process. Masten writes that “the careful regulation of textual property within the paradigm of singular authorship” (158) structures the prefatory letters. He concludes that “her writing draws on emergent paradigms of authorship—the nascent policing of textual theft and borrowing—and inscribes discourses that have become more familiar in the author’s subsequent domain and reign: the self-sufficient ‘naturall’ organicism of the home-grown author” (162). But Masten does not allow a construction of “individuality” to be the final word. He writes about the prefatory image of the humble cottage that serves as a metaphor for Cavendish’s writing process: “Even at the moment that Cavendish labors to construct authorship as a category independent of social, economic, and cultural contingencies, and based instead solely within the individual, she does so in a language that is intimately tied to precisely those categories” (162).

The language Masten speaks of is *MN*’s characterization of herself as a worker, referring often to her own labor in producing the folio. While she accomplishes this through the image of the worker in reference to herself, she fixes it with a protracted use of the image of the humble cottager. “A General Prologue to all my Playes” establishes the mode of authority constituted by the folio. In it, *MN* equates herself with the cottager, making the building of his house analogous to her own labor as a writer. She contrasts her plays with Jonson’s that are “*wrought / By Wits Invention, and his labouring thought*” (A7r):

*But my poor Playes  
 ... they were so quickly writ,  
 So quickly writ, that I did almost cry  
 For want of work, my time for to imploy:  
 Sometime for want of work, I’m forc’d to play  
 And idley to cast my time away:*

*Like as poor Labourers, all they desire,  
Is, to have so much work, it might them tire:  
Such difference betwixt each several brain,  
Some labour hard, and offer life to gain;  
Some lazie lye, and papred are with ease,  
And some industrious are, the world to please .... (A7r)*

This part of the prologue constructs the goal of labor as physical exhaustion. In these lines above, we see that idle time is actually leisure time that must be filled: "*Sometime for want of work, I'm forc'd to play.*"

MN insists that original invention is better than "plagiarism" and uses the metaphor of the humble cottager to stress the insularity of invention. She claims that because "Johnson, Shakespear, Beaumont, Fletcher" were learned and witty, they could take their plots from other plays; but she writes, "*All my Playes Plots, my own poor brain did make*" (A7v). Her continued gloss on these lines is an extended metaphor of herself as a cottager, contrasting with the eloquent, academic wit of the aforementioned playwrights. In the middle of the prologue, she traces the process of building the cottage as a metaphor for the writing process, including itemizing the materials and noting that they come from the cottager's land rather than "forein parts":

*I upon my own Foundation writ;  
Like those that have a little patch of Land,  
Even so much whereon a house may stand:  
The Owner builds a house, though of no shew,  
A Cottage warm and clearn though thatch'd and low ...  
Nor Carpenters, nor Masons doth not hire,  
But builds a house himself, whole and intire:  
Materials none from forein parts are brought;  
Nor hath he Stone and Timber with art wrought;  
But some sound Tree, which on his ground did grow,  
Which he cuts down with many a labouring blow;  
And with his hatchet, and his saw, he cuts  
His Tree in many parts, those parts he puts  
In several places, beams posts, planchers layes,  
And thus a house with his own stock doth raise. (A7v)*

Like an “original” writer, the cottager is self-sufficient and admits nothing that is not owned by himself or cultivated on his own land.<sup>29</sup> The prologue carefully points out that

*He steals nor borrows not of any Neighbour,  
But lives contentedly of his own labour;  
And by his labour, he may thrive, and live  
To be an old rich man, and then may leave  
His Wealth, to build a Monument of Fame,  
Which may for ever keep alive his name. (A7v)*

The monument to Fame proves that he is a worthy man; it is through his labor that he gains wealth and lives “to be an old rich man” whose wealth builds a “Monument of Fame” to his memory. At this point, after heralding the means by which the cottager labors, and assuring his posterity, the prologue offers in epic simile the author as an analogous construction to the cottager:

*Just so, I hope, the works that I have writ,  
Which are the buildings of my natural wit;  
My own Inheritance, as Natures child,  
But the Worlds Vanities would me beguile:  
But I have thriftly been, housewiv’ d my time,  
And built both Cottages of Prose and Rhime;  
All the materials in my head did grow,  
All is my own, and nothing do I owe. (A7v-A8r)*

The writing process here is figured in the same terms as the building process: the author of this folio (“I” ) culls only her “natural wit,” and her “own Inheritance,” in order to write: she grows “all the materials in my head,” and the buildings left to her memory are “Cottages of Prose and Rhime.” Most importantly, she retains ownership over her cottages which she owns outright without due to other builders/authors: “All is my own, and nothing do I owe.”

The prologue concludes with the conventional trope of the written



work as monument. However, instead of the monument being a palace, or a marble statue, the cottage remains the testament to memory and authority:

*But all that I desire when as I dye,  
My memory in my own Works may lye:  
And when as others build them Marble Tombs,  
To inurn their dust, and fretted vaulted Rooms,  
I care not where my dust, or bones remain,  
So my Works live, the labour of my brain.  
I covet not a stately, cut, carv'd Tomb,  
But that my Works, in Fames house may have room:  
Thus I my poor built Cottage am content,  
When that I dye, may be my Monument. (A8r)*

Her insistence on and privileging of the lowliness of her plays, emphasized by the metaphor of the laborer building his own indigenous house, ensures her unobtrusiveness—she uses class metaphors as a way of being apologetic, but of nevertheless asserting the worth of her folios, and assuring her Fame.

The convention of the work as monument accomplishes the guarantee of chastity for *MN* when viewed in the terms set up in the prefatory materials. Masten rightfully sees Cavendish struggling to articulate a gendered author-identity (since the cottager in her prologue is male), but I think she has hit upon the perfect expression of her authority which is underwritten by her class status as well as her chastity. While the humble cottager is never pointedly “chaste” in any of the representations throughout the folio, chastity is implied through the author/cottager’s lack of “textual intercourse” with other authors, as noted in the passage above. Masten argues convincingly that collaboration among playwrights implied sexual relationships.<sup>30</sup> He claims that Cavendish rejects that collaboration in order to be singular. As evidence, he points out that there is only one place where she sexes collaboration—in her relationship with her husband. My response is two-fold: as I have pointed out, the attribution of certain passages in *The*

*Lady Contemplation* to her husband serves to uphold the (female) author's own chastity. Secondly, if the author who collaborates is sexually coded, then the author who does not—or does so only with her husband—is chaste, even in her textual production. Such textual chastity becomes an indicator of her sexual status. In this way, the humble cottager who has no reference point outside of him or her self, who remains pure and yet industrious is an appropriate image of chastity for an aristocratic woman writer.<sup>31</sup>

Thus this image of the humble cottager works in two ways. It operates the way Masten outlines, as an early example of a shifting discourse of singular authority. But that very insularity is important for a female author fighting potential charges of inappropriate sexual behavior as a consequence of printing what she wrote. Noting Cavendish's "*will-to-publish*," Hiscock writes that "at a time when women were still encouraged to be *chaste, silent and obedient*, it is not surprising that a woman who deliberately sought public attention is viewed as a disordering force" (404). Facing this stricture, Cavendish uses chastity as a productive vehicle for expressing class privilege as a strategic means of investing a proscription with a limited amount of flexibility. In an essay on Cavendish's poetry, Hero Chalmers makes this point eloquently:

Cavendish's marital circumstances and her figuration of their links with her publication not only assist her to reconcile an unusually self-promoting authorial voice with the dictates of wifely obedience. They also aid her circumnavigation of the perceived unchastity of women's publication by helping to create a climate amenable to the notion of chaste feminine display.<sup>32</sup>

The result of this chaste labor is the creation of a monument to fame, as *MN* hopes in the final lines of the prologue. Virtual monuments built through good qualities appear in other places in *Playes*, and, as in the passage

above, these are generally juxtaposed with substantial monuments, including grave markers and palaces. But that virtues are spoken of as visible monuments with economic value illustrates the extent to which there is a need to show virtue as visible, legible, unmistakable, even when disguised as a poor farm worker. Or rather, especially when it is disguised and is potentially subject to misrecognition, as was the case with Poor Virtue. Therefore, the disguise is an opportunity to define standards for behavior because it allows for what it disguises to be tested, rather than providing an opportunity to act outside of one's station. A monument testifies to the successful maintenance of virtue. The economic value of the monument expresses the usefulness of "virtue" to a particular classed vision of (female) behavior. After all, Poor Virtue's virtue isn't rewarded by simply existing—it gains value only by being exchanged for wealth and status through her marriage to Lord Title, a marriage purchased for her by the standards inculcated by her class status.

The reason the monument has salience as an indicator of chastity is that chastity in fact has no visible marker. Its indeterminate status underwrites the anxiety that becomes all-consuming for the characters in *The Tragedie of Mariam*. The problems that attend the invisibility of chastity are distilled in the following exchange in Cavendish's *Wits Cabal* (1662). A group of women discusses going to a fair to see the sideshows. They spar over various monstrosities, and in doing so, equate women who are not virgins with monsters:

*Bon' Esprit.* The most mostrous [sic] Creature I imagin, is a headless Maid

*Frisk.* What is that, a devirginated Maid?

*Bon' Esprit.* Yes.

*Ambition.* When she is devirginated, she is no Maid.

*Bon' Esprit.* O yes; for as a Wife is one that is married, a Widow one

that hath been married, so a Maid is one that was never married, and a Virgin is one that never knew man, and a headless Maid is one that hath lost her Virginitie, and yet was never married.

*Faction.* If a devirginated Maid be a headless Monster, in the World there are many headless Monsters.

*Heroick.* But the best of it is, Lady, their Monstrosity is invisible. (269)

This passage registers the certain anxiety that a woman's inscrutable sexuality makes her a liability because the proof of her chastity, or the evidence of her promiscuity, is invisible (a common cultural sentiment that I will document at length in the following chapter). But the characters then agree that *behavior* will be the indicator of her sexual status. Like that of drunks and whores, certain behavior is a fixed signifier to indicate vices beyond doubt. Behavior therefore becomes a monument to invisible traits and qualities. Still speaking of "headless Maids," Bon 'Esprit claims

they are not monstrous in Nature, but in Vice, for they are transformed by their Crimes' Ambition. So are Drunkards.

*Bon' Esprit.* they are so; for all Curtezans and Drunkards are beasts: For though a Drunkard is not a headless beast, yet he is a brainless beast.

*Portrait.* But what Monster is that you would have us to see?

*Faction.* Why a woman with a Hogs face.

*Bon' Esprit.* Then 'tis likely she hath a Sows disposition. (269)

Just as a woman with a "Hogs face" is likely to have a "Sows disposition," a devirginated Maid is likely to act as one, even though the scene of her crime and its place on her body is invisible. Indeed, printing something a woman had written was considered to be very suspect behavior, and women who did so were often denigrated in sexual terms. In order for chastity to be legible, there has to be a "monument" to it.

As a visible monument to its author's chastity, some copies of the 1662 folio offer a frontispiece showing Cavendish herself as a monument, enshrined in a marble alcove, surrounded by columns and two classical

figures [fig. 1].<sup>33</sup> She holds the folds of her skirt in her left hand and her right hand rests on her hip. While this stance appears to represent Cavendish sexually (her posture, her low-cut dress, and the casual, open placement of her hand on her hip could be read suggestively), she is at the same time set apart from the viewer in her protective alcove. In fact, her separateness from the viewer as well as from the other figures in the frontispiece allegorizes her class status: in addition to being cordoned off, she holds no symbols of her trade in the way that the two figures do, she is not shown writing or reading, for example.<sup>34</sup> This is not the representation of “me the worker,” but of the leisured female writer enveloped in expensive fabric and jewels who has come through a liminal space to be enshrined in her leisured class status.

The inscription below her, in rhetoric replicated in the Prologue, asserts the perfection of the author and her ownership of her work. The frontispiece might make her appear sexually available, but she is not available for the viewer: the inscription under her statue makes that clear. It admonishes the viewer,

Here on this Figure Cast a Glance,  
But so as if it were by Chance,  
Your eyes not fixt, they must not stay.

The viewer is instructed not to gaze upon the statue (since it is only a “Shadowe” of the person). The adoring glance the viewer is allowed is instrumental in gaining her fame (she must be acknowledged), but the furtiveness of the glance ensures her “chastity.” The viewer is asked to consider her “Soul’s Picture, Judgment, witt;” in other words, the viewer must read her virtue rather than her body (this puts the reader in a position similar to Lord Title “reading” Poor Virtue”). The final lines of the inscription reinforce her chastity by using the same language of chaste

authorship found in the prologue:

Then read those Lines which Shee hath writt,  
by Phancy's Pencill drawne alone  
Which Peece but Shee, Can justly owne.

She writes her text alone which also ensures her ownership of her work. This singularity reinforces the idea that she is chaste, in the same way that it reinforces the status of both her authorship and her work as symbolic capital. Abbe Blum notes that monumentalizing "fixes value, assigns noteworthiness, and it arises in part from a desire to possess what lies beyond possession."<sup>35</sup> Both Cavendish and her works are monumentalized and therefore symbolically valorized by the rhetoric used to describe them. The work, and the representation of the author are therefore indicators of the appropriateness of the author's behavior in having the text printed. The prefatory materials, the frontispiece, the scenes designating the Duke's authorship, the alignment of Cavendish as author-function with the virtuous Lady Virtue and the humble cottager—all are monuments to the chastity and class status of the author.

## CHAPTER III NOTES

<sup>1</sup> My use of liminality is informed by Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969). Turner writes that liminality is defined by “spaces or times ... which cannot be captured in ... classificatory nets” (vii). These moments or places are transitional: “The attributes of liminality or of liminal *personae* (“threshold people”) are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial. As such, their ambiguous and indeterminate attributes are expressed by a rich variety of symbols in the many societies that ritualize social and cultural transitions” (95). Turner identifies two types of liminality, that of status elevation and status reversal. My chapter argues that the image of the humble cottager is a liminality of status elevation.

<sup>2</sup> Turner notes that in liminality of status elevation, “the ritual subject or novice is being conveyed *irreversibly* from a lower to a higher position in an institutionalized system of such positions” (167, my emphasis).

<sup>3</sup> The seventeenth-century usage of “chaste” meant “pure from unlawful sexual intercourse,” or sexual loyalty in a marriage (OED, “chaste,” def. 1). It could also be used to refer to virginity (OED, “chastity,” def. 2).

<sup>4</sup> For a rehearsal of the firsts attributed to her, see Nancy Cotton, *Women Playwrights in England, 1363-1750* (London and Toronto: Associated University Press), 42; Linda R. Payne, “Dramatic Dreamscape: Women’s Dreams and Utopian Vision in the Works of Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle,” in *Curtain Calls: British and American Women and the Theater, 1660-1820*, edited by Mary Anne Schofield and Cecilia Macheski (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1991), especially 18-9; Jacqueline Pearson, *The Prostituted Muse: Images of Women and Women Dramatists, 1642-1737* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1988), 125; Dale B. J. Randall, *Winter Fruit: English Drama, 1642-1660* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995), 326-7.

<sup>5</sup> Margaret Ferguson, “Moderation and Its Discontents: Recent Work on Renaissance Women,” *Feminist Studies* 20 (1994), 349-66.

<sup>6</sup> Jonathan Goldberg, *Desiring Women Writers: English Renaissance Examples* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 11.

<sup>7</sup> Margaret J. M. Ezell, *Writing Women’s Literary History* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 28.

<sup>8</sup> Catherine Gallagher, “Embracing the Absolute: The Politics of the Female Subject in Seventeenth-century England,” *Genders* 1 (1988): 24-39. Citation from 26.

<sup>9</sup> See Pearson’s discussion of the ambivalences of marriage through characters in the plays, 130-3.

<sup>10</sup> Mihoko Sukuki, “Margaret Cavendish and the Female Satirist,” *Studies in English Literature* 37 (1997), 483-500. Citation from 494.

<sup>11</sup> Laura J. Rosenthal, *Playwrights and Plagiarists in Early Modern England: Gender, Authorship, Literary Property* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1996), 77. See also Irene G. Dash, “Single-Sex Retreats in Two Early Modern Dramas: *Love’s Labor’s Lost* and *The Convent of Pleasure*,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 47 (1996), 387-95. Dash writes “Cavendish was suggesting the possibility of a utopia—one too quickly destroyed by male guile” (394).

- <sup>12</sup> Andrew Hiscock, "Here's no design, no plot, nor any ground': The Drama of Margaret Cavendish and the Disorderly Woman," *Women's Writing* 4 (1997), 401-20. Citation from 414.
- <sup>13</sup> The OED notes that among its meanings, the term "slut" means a dirty slovenly woman (1a), a kitchen maid (1b), and a promiscuous woman (2a).
- <sup>14</sup> Even more striking is that the first part of the play is labelled a "Comedy" while the second part is a "Come-tragedy" (Cavendish's coinage).
- <sup>15</sup> *Scenes* appears immediately after the play *The Presence* in Margaret Cavendish's 1668 folio of plays, *Plays, Never Before Printed*. As its title suggests, it is a collection of scenes "designed to be put into the Presence; but by reason I found they would make that Play too long, I thought it requisite to Print them by themselves" (93).
- <sup>16</sup> OED, "Moll." Moll can be a term of affection, it can refer to a thief, and it can also refer to a prostitute. "Mall" is a listed variant spelling in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.
- <sup>17</sup> Poor Virtue's duty on the farm, it turns out, is to take care of the sheep. I would argue that this deliberately places her in the pastoral tradition, and the scenes are in fact quite similar to the French pastourelle tradition in which the poor shepherdess is seduced by travelling gallants. The opening stage direction of her first trial scene is: "Enter Poor Virtue with a Sheephook, as coming from tending her sheep" (196).
- <sup>18</sup> It appears that Tom reads Title's "lease of fifty pounds" as an out-of-pocket gift. But at this time "lease" refers to land under agreement, or refers exclusively to tenure of land use. Therefore, "A lease of fifty pounds a year" does not mean that Title gives Tom money. He either gives him land that Tom can lease to someone for fifty pounds a year, or he gives him a "gift" of land that Tom will have to lease from Title for fifty pounds a year. OED, "lease."
- <sup>19</sup> The notations in the 1662 folio appear to have been part of the original typesetting because the words of the characters are indented around the notations. Similar notations in the 1668 folio are on slips of paper pasted into the text, suggesting that they were added later.
- <sup>20</sup> See Keith Thomas, "The Double Standard," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 20 (1959), 195-216. Thomas writes that because women were considered property of men, their sexual availability was considered threatening (210-12).
- <sup>21</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 178.
- <sup>22</sup> For example, see Hero Chalmers, "Dismantling the Myth of 'Mad Madge': the Cultural Context of Margaret Cavendish's Authorial Self-presentation," *Women's Writing* 4 (1997), 323-39; Payne, 19-21; Randall, 316, 328-9; Rosenthal 60-3; Suzuki, 484-6.
- <sup>23</sup> Jeffrey Masten, *Textual Intercourse: Collaboration, Authorship, and Sexualities in Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 157. There are 10 letters addressed to the reader, a dedicatory poem from her husband, a prologue to the plays, and a short play titled "An Introduction."
- <sup>24</sup> Masten, 156. "Mistris Corrivall" is the title of his chapter on Cavendish.
- <sup>25</sup> Jean Gagen, "Honor and Fame in the Works of the Duchess of Newcastle," *Studies in Philology* 56 (1959), 519-38. Citation from 525.
- <sup>26</sup> Elaine Hobby, *Virtue of Necessity: English Women's Writing, 1649-88* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988).
- <sup>27</sup> There is no sigla on every other page in the prefatory materials. Therefore, I cite following Hobby: "The initial sheets [of the 1662 folio] are gathered in twos, the signed leaves bearing sigs [A2] [A3-A7]. The intermediate halvesheets gathered with them are described here as A3/2-A7/2" (218 n15).
- <sup>28</sup> Rosenthal, 59.



<sup>29</sup> See Sandra Sherman, "Trembling Texts: Margaret Cavendish and the Dialectic of Authorship," *English Literary Renaissance* 24 (1994), 184-210. Writing generally about Cavendish's first-person narratives, Sherman notes that in Cavendish's works, "original authorship thrives on self-enclosure" (195): "Her works offer a narrative of the self in isolation disciplining the fecund mind into literary production" (197). Gallagher is of course also relevant here, focusing as she does on the "feminization of the writing subject who is isolated and complete unto herself" (27).

<sup>30</sup> In particular, see Masten, 4-6 and chapter 2: "Between Gentlemen: Homoeroticism, Collaboration, and the Discourse of Friendship" (28-62).

<sup>31</sup> James Fitzmaurice, "Fancy and the Family: Self-Characterizations of Margaret Cavendish," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 53 (1990), 199-209. Fitzmaurice suggests that this singularity is an attempt "to protect herself from the fate of Lady Mary Wroth" (206) who was castigated for printing her work.

<sup>32</sup> Chalmers, 326.

<sup>33</sup> Fitzmaurice writes: "There is, interestingly, little pattern to the way in which frontispieces appear in her books: that is, virtually any book may be found with any of the three frontispieces or with none at all. Nevertheless, the frontispieces are commonly if not uniformly present in the books" (202). He notes that the frontispiece I consider here is the "most frequently found of the three and therefore, it could be argued, is probably the most influential" (203). All three frontispieces are reproduced in Fitzmaurice's article.

<sup>34</sup> Another of the frontispieces shows Cavendish in a study, without books, but with a writing desk with paper and pen. Cavendish is not working, but sits staring at the viewer behind what Fitzmaurice describes as a church altar rail (202). The inscription notes that she is influenced by what is in her brain, rather than the books around her: "Her Library on which She looks / It is her Head, her Thoughts her Books." See Fitzmaurice, 202 and Gallagher, 30.

<sup>35</sup> Abbe Blum, "'Strike all that look upon with mar[b]le': Monumentalizing Women in Shakespeare's Plays," in *The Renaissance Englishwoman in Print: Counterbalancing the Canon*, edited by Anne Haselkorn and Betty S. Travitsky (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1990), 99-118. Citation from 99.

## CHAPTER IV

### WRITING LEGITIMACY OR, CRITICAL DESIRE AND THE CASE OF *THE TRAGEDIE OF MARIAM*

**“Behavior that is essential for economic reasons  
is transformed into a social virtue.”**

**--J. K. Galbraith**

During the time Mary Wroth and Elizabeth Cary composed their plays, it was a commonplace that a woman who made her writing public through printing was sexually suspect. Writing about the early seventeenth century, Wendy Wall notes that the discursive strategy linking sexual availability with publicity was a way to keep women from printing:

Constrained by the norms of acceptable feminine behavior, women were specifically discouraged from tapping into the newly popular channel of print; to do so threatened the cornerstone of their moral and social well-being. The rampant idealization of chastity acted as a lynchpin that precariously linked female bodily and spiritual integrity with a coherent cosmic and social order that was continually threatening to slip into chaos.<sup>1</sup>

The printing of a text could be interpreted as a usurpation of male prerogative which threatened the whole social order. Though *The Tragedie of Mariam, Faire Queene of Jewry* (1613) was printed without the name of its female author, the title page nevertheless announces that it is “Written by that learned, vertuous, and truly noble Ladie, E.C.” The affirmation of her education, virtue, and class status protects E.C. from charges that could

accompany the printing of a text.<sup>2</sup> The title page's attempt to guarantee the reputation of the author in spite of the publicity of the text is present through the content of *Mariam* itself. Within the play, all of the female characters use their speech in ways that transgress the chaste, silent and obedient stricture—all the female characters, that is, except Graphina. Graphina appears in only one scene of the play, and is the only character in *Mariam* not named in the source text for the play (Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews* ).<sup>3</sup> She is a slave girl in love with the brother of the king, who returns her affection. She presents herself as the conventional chaste and obedient woman, but she does so through speech. In fact, her name is allegorical, meaning "writer" (*graphesis* ). Because of her name, and because of the fact that she does speak, Graphina represents for critics a potential site of resistance, a momentary subversion of the prescription of silence.

Jonathan Goldberg's recent work on *Mariam*, for example, treats Graphina as an allegory of a writing woman, since "the addition of the diminutive, feminizing 'ina' to the graphic root insistently genders writing as female."<sup>4</sup> Goldberg takes his cues from one of Margaret Ferguson's essays on the play, in which she argues that "Graphina represents for Cary the possibility of ... a nontransgressive mode of discourse."<sup>5</sup> Goldberg writes about the light "Graphina" sheds on an understanding of female authority: "in supplying the name Graphina for a character in her play ... Cary is leaving a mark that is equivalent to her signature or, better, perhaps a mark that functions as a kind of generic signature making claims for women's writing" (166). While Goldberg notes that Graphina "produces text" (172) and considers her as both a "rival for Mariam" (169) and a token signifying the terms of male-male bonds in the play (those between Herod and Pheroras in particular), he does not consider her relationship to the other female

characters in the play, especially Mariam (and *their* production of “text”). Drawing on Goldberg’s as well as Ferguson’s assertions, I argue that Graphina’s submissive speech coupled with the significations of her name “corrects” the other female characters’ speech. In particular, she serves as a corrective for Mariam’s transgressive speech which threatens to discredit Mariam’s chastity and obedience. Although Mariam seems “subversive” because she is so transgressive, the fact of her conventional tragic punishment for her crimes of transgression only reinforces the ideal of the submissive woman. The main point of contrast between Graphina and Mariam is the way they use their speech. Their speech in turn indicates their sexual status, which is dependent, in this play, on chastity’s value as symbolic capital to underwrite the legitimacy of patriarchal rule in general, Herod’s in particular. This chapter will unpack the discursive saliency as it appears in *Mariam* of the connections among chastity, class, speech, and publicity.

In *Mariam*, silence is a signifier of class legitimacy because it identifies the chaste, aristocratic woman as symbolic capital benefiting the patriarchal requirements of her class position. The play has as its central focus the anxiety of legitimacy, in terms of title and property ownership. This type of legitimacy is threatened by transgressions within marriage, clearly illustrated in this instance by divorce and adultery. This anxiety surrounding the instability of legitimacy is clear in relationship to Herod: before the play begins, he married Mariam in order to have the best claim to the throne, and he killed her grandfather and brother so that his legitimacy as king will be uncontested. Herod sentences Mariam to death because her chastity threatens his ownership of that legitimacy. Mariam therefore functions biologically to support the legitimacy of Herod’s rule. Because Herod has a former wife, and a son by her, divorce becomes a central aggravator of legitimacy, as is clear in

the contest between Doris and Mariam in which their children's lineage in relationship to Herod takes center stage. As Herod's current wife, Mariam transgresses his proprietary rights when she speaks in public as well as when she speaks with Sohemus. The end of the play does not bring a new political order, as is conventional in tragic closure, but rather legitimates the same patriarchal order—Herod remains king, Salome remarries.

It should be apparent, then, that my argument that Graphina's "silence" is a reinforcement of patriarchal order and serves as a didactic antidote for Mariam's problematic "speech" will be a version of the "univocally conservative"<sup>6</sup> reading of *Mariam*. In short, the conservative critical view holds that in E.C.'s play, Mariam is subject without recourse to the forces that oppress her. The conservative view does not posit Mariam as a "subversive" character, nor does it conclude that the author herself was autonomous or was condoning freedom for women from traditional societal constraint. Although my argument starts with the conservative reading as a basis, I will later suggest that it does not provide a wholly satisfying interpretation of Graphina, even though Graphina's appropriate speech (to Pheroras alone) is consonant with a conservative reading. My own view of Graphina is that she embodies the paradox of needing to speak publicly, a paradox that is productive in the printing of the play.

The opposite construction of Mariam (which I will refer to as the anti-conservative view) is written by critics primarily invested in, as Marta Straznicky puts it, the writer as woman, rather than the woman as writer (105, 6n). This version of feminist criticism begins with a need to construct the author sympathetically, to find her autonomous in the face of her oppressive culture. In other words, the object of analysis of most *Mariam* criticism to date is Elizabeth Cary, not *Mariam*. This desire often either springs from or

leads to a biographical reading of the play. Straznicky notes that “published criticism [of *Mariam* ] is remarkably consistent in its biographical and mimetic orientation, generally reading the play in the context of the author’s own struggle against oppression by her husband.”<sup>7</sup> It is understandable that critics want to read Cary’s works biographically and that they find it particularly easy to do, since we have a biography of the author.<sup>8</sup> But Stephanie Wright, in an article on *Mariam* critiquing biographical criticism on Cary’s works, has noted that an “anxious biographical validation of Cary’s works is no longer necessary and is, in many ways, regressive and harmful” (64). The seduction provided by an account of the life is undeniable for many critics: Wright suggests that it aids in “canonization” of the author (58). It is also appealing because it provides the comfort of a stable interpretation: a reading of the play can be grounded in the facts of the life of the author. I do not necessarily want to undermine that important feminist step, but I do want to shift the set of assumptions that drive an anti-conservative reading.

The impetus for the anti-conservative view of the play, with its analysis of the ambivalence or contradictoriness of the play, has been a critical desire to reclaim a position of autonomy from patriarchal oppression for Elizabeth Cary herself.<sup>9</sup> For example, Kim Walker finds ambiguity in the various subject positions of *Mariam* in the play: “the play’s more radical interrogation of Renaissance gender ideology resides” in “disjunctures” that lead to “conflicting and often contradictory positions.”<sup>10</sup> While the methodological point of Nancy A. Gutierrez’s essay is that biographical and historical criticism should be combined (233), Karen L. Raber is much more insistent when she writes that “the issues *The Tragedy of Mariam* addresses ... had material implications for Cary herself and *demand* to be understood in the context of Cary’s upbringing and marriage.”<sup>11</sup> Likewise, Ros Ballaster

claims that "Cary's choice and rendering of this plot is ... peculiarly appropriate to her own biographical circumstances .... Mariam's criticism of arbitrary and absolute reign on the part of a loved husband in the figure of Herod seems to be peculiarly proleptic."<sup>12</sup> Meredith Skura's "The Reproduction of Mothering in *Mariam, Queen of Jewry: A Defense of Biographical Criticism*" contains only a short reading of the play. Most of the article is devoted to a reading of the biography, which turns into an a-historical psychoanalysis of Cary herself that draws connections between Cary and Princess Diana. The conclusion of her essay makes it clear that her inquiry has been guided by a desire to find Cary the Woman: "the accidents of temperament and family history, which gave Cary one mother rather than another, produce different effects in different subjects, even while the field of force operating in all may be similar; and these diverse effects can best be discerned by taking account of biography" (56). Indeed, it is this conceptual superimposition of Cary's life and the biography that drives Skura's article: she even abbreviates the biography as "*Life* " so that the biography is not text but unmediated access to factual events.<sup>13</sup> By contrast, Dymphna Callaghan incisively articulates my claim that most *Mariam* criticism "frequently degenerate[s] into an apparently irresistible compulsion to explicate the play in terms of the female playwright, a tendency to displace the critical focus from the text onto the elusive and perhaps inscrutable woman who lurks seductively behind it."<sup>14</sup>

It is therefore the desire to reconstruct the actual life of the seventeenth-century author of the play that drives the anti-conservative view of *Mariam*. An insistence on narrowing the possible interpretations of the play in this manner obscures the ways that subversiveness is problematic when it is located textually, especially as it relates to, in this case, seventeenth-

century female agency. The 1613 text then becomes a blank slate onto which decontextualized, ahistorical readings of the play are projected. As an example of the desire critics have for *Mariam*, I will turn briefly to an example of a staging of a section of the play. The 1990 "Attending to Women in Early Modern England" conference included as part of the program an inventive "play" titled "Attending to Renaissance Women," written by Catherine Schuler and Sharon Ammen. The piece was scripted from several different early modern texts and "contrast[ed] women's writings about themselves with writings by men about women."<sup>15</sup> *Mariam* is used in what Schuler and Ammen describe as a "humorous" (343) section titled "The Married State." The passage used from *Mariam* is the confrontation between Salome and Constabarus in which Salome insists she will seek a divorce from him. Schuler and Ammen's stage directions for the scene from *Mariam* call for it to be "delivered to other women in cast and audience, cast members cheer on Salome enthusiastically" (347).

A comparison of Schuler and Ammen's text to the 1613 text of *Mariam* reveals a decontextualized use of Salome in "Attending to Renaissance Women." In the 1990 text, Salome speaks her lines about divorce to a sympathetic audience (as per the stage directions, above), with heavily edited comments from Constabarus, who is onstage with her. Her demand for a divorce makes her seem to be an early feminist, and she appears blameless and oppressed as she reasons that women should be allowed to divorce. Constabarus appears to be the typical oppressive husband who expects complete submission from his wife. The 1990 text makes two changes in particular that illustrate how the editing gives the characters very different roles than in the 1613 text. First, while the 1990 text retains Constabarus' line spoken after he sees Salome with Silleus, "A stranger's private conference is



shame," it cuts out the line that would explain this conservative assertion and that also indicates Salome's "crime": "Oft haue I found ... you ... Consorted with this base Arabian heere" (393-4). In this line, Constabarus openly accuses his wife of adultery. "Attending to Renaissance Women" also leaves out Constabarus' declaration of love: "I loue thee more then thou thy selfe doest know" (400). Second, Schuler and Ammen's version of Salome and Constabarus' scene allows Salome the final words:

*Const* . ... You are the first, and will, I hope, be last,  
That ever sought her husband to divorce.

*Salome* . ... Though I be first that to this course do bend,  
I shall not be the last, full well I know. (348)

This order reverses the exchange in the 1613 text. Not only does Constabarus speak the last words of the scene in *Mariam*, but he speaks them unanswered: before he finishes the scene, Salome exits without offering the rebuttal that the Schuler and Ammen text claims for her and for the future.<sup>16</sup> The editorial strategy ends with a placement of Salome as the first in a genealogy that extends to the 1990 audience (these are the last lines used from *Mariam*).

My point in noting the differences between the 1613 text and Schuler and Ammen's use of it is not that the "original" text has some sort of "integrity" that the 1990 play violates. In the context of Schuler and Ammen's play, Salome's words (in their edited form) do perhaps sound radically progressive—a critique of early British gender inequalities. However, Schuler and Ammen's particular reshaping of the passage fulfills a desire that reaches beyond the character of Salome: such re-casting would allow for a revision of the other main characters as well. If Salome is indeed to be cheered on "enthusiastically," then *Mariam's* speech would no longer be

transgressive, Doris' curses could be dismissed, and Graphina's "unsullied femininity" would indeed be, as Callaghan finds it, "dramatically insipid."<sup>17</sup>

The experience of *Mariam* in "Attending to Renaissance Women"—as pleasureable as it might be for a twentieth-century audience—is not consonant with our understanding of *Mariam*, the 1613 text. Schuler and Ammen's text (purposefully) re-writes Salome's adulterous, villified role in a play whose contemporary reception would see her forthrightness as threatening and immoral. Yet some scholars have seen this radical discourse, not in a rewriting, but in the 1613 text itself. Some critics have written that the play "presents us with a Salome who is intelligent, articulate and strong, and who, moreover, argues convincingly that women should be allowed to divorce their husbands."<sup>18</sup> Likewise, it has been argued that Salome is an "ideal of an independent, even rebellious, intellectual life."<sup>19</sup> However, Salome is the villain of this play. Like Iago setting up Othello, Salome convinces Herod to have *Mariam* killed. Herod tells Salome, "hadst not thou made *Herod* vnsecure: / I had not doubted *Mariams* innocence, / But still had held her in my heart for pure" (1786-8), clearly showing Salome's effect on him. Since her desire for a divorce stems from her desire to remarry, she remains within the same patriarchal structures that oppress the women in the play. As Goldberg notes, "Salome's existence is entirely defined by the institution of marriage; even the rebelliousness of her promiscuous desire is situated within it .... [Her] will to power entirely operates within, even when it seems to violate, the patriarchal subordination of women" (179-80). Clearly, the critics above who champion Salome as "thrillingly proto-feminist"<sup>20</sup> are motivated by a desire to see the ways that *Mariam* is subversive, not the ways that it posits and reinforces the economy of the chaste, silent, and obedient wife. For this conservative representation, we turn to *Mariam*, and to her

“rival” Graphina. What happens to “Salome” in criticism is only a gauge for the critical readings of the other characters.

### I. In Defense of a Conservative Reading: the Case of the Third Chorus

While the “conservative” view of *Mariam* is unpopular with many feminist critics, perhaps with good reason, it is the only reading that accounts for classed economic expectations for women’s behavior and social function. It is also the only reading that finds a reason for *Mariam*’s death, and is able to posit the text’s participation in the dominant discourse of women’s sexuality in conjunction with their status as property in seventeenth-century England. Contextualizing *Mariam* in this way does not preclude other readings, nor does it insist that every text by a woman is capable only of maintaining dominance. But it does allow access to a reading of the play that justly problematizes notions of preindustrial female “autonomy.”<sup>21</sup> As a feminist critic, I am not advocating the conservative terms of the play. As I hope will be clear from my concluding discussion of Graphina, I do not necessarily advocate each implication of the conservative reading. Like Goldberg, I want to “make available critically ways of speaking about the play that move beyond moral condemnation or blame” (185). However, part of that movement involves refiguring the use of that “moral condemnation and blame” to consider its discursive function within the ideological closure of the play.<sup>22</sup> Because a text is written by a woman does not mean without exception that it *goes against* patriarchy. To suggest that texts by women are always subversive is to justify gender essentialism.

I therefore begin this section with a problem alluded to at the end of chapter three: the difference in function of men’s sexual behavior and

women's in a patrilinear system. Obviously, this particular argument is in serious danger of sliding into biological essentialism. In this chapter, I am using a recognition of emerging class consciousness to counter the tradition of gender essentialism in criticism of *Mariam*. I want to be clear that my point is that in seventeenth-century England, biological difference is conscripted into significance by economic systems, so that there is a naturalized basis for economy. That use is not a "natural" one: it reflects a mode of economy rather than essential biological function. It is also a mode that refers to the socio-economic relationship not between every husband and wife, but between aristocratic-proprietyed husbands and wives. This chapter assumes that (aristocratic) women are enjoined to be chaste as an economic imperative, not a moral one (though that imperative is naturalized *as* moral). The idea of chastity as a social virtue is naturalized, and indeed becomes a site of essentialism, one that I want to interrogate by showing its value as symbolic capital in an early capitalist, patrilinear economy. The performance of chastity is implicated in much more than simply a woman's not sharing her body in sexual relations with someone other than her husband. Strictures against women's speech are linked with strictures controlling women's sexuality and have economic consequences--the very compulsory chastity that the texts requires of its characters has economic and class benefits in the course of the play. At stake in these strictures is lineage and legitimacy, which in obvious ways are classed concerns.

A "conservative" reading has a history in criticism. Its basis is the economic perspective on chastity: a married woman's chastity ensures the legitimacy of her husband's children in a patri-linear system. Her husband's lack of chastity does not endanger that social order. Angeline Goreau provides a concise statement of this operation: "The absolute insistence on

chastity in women had its roots in concrete economic and social circumstance: under the patriarchal, primogenital inheritance system, the matter of paternity could most emphatically not be open to question."<sup>23</sup> Goreau points out that compulsory chastity is a classed means of controlling behavior, rather than only a gendered one:

As the aristocracy's chief means of consolidating and perpetuating power and wealth was through arranged marriage, the undoubted chastity of daughters was a crucial concern .... by its loss she would deprive her father of the possibility of selling her to a husband whose family line she would perpetuate. Legally, a woman's chastity was considered the property of either her father or her husband (9-10).

This model is not a middle class model, or a lower-class model. It is paradigmatic only for the class that has significant property (i.e. land, estate, title) to lose from a wife's promiscuity.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, my argument here is not applicable across class lines to unpropertied women. The text supports a discourse of legitimacy that supports a particular model for aristocratic women's sexual behavior.<sup>25</sup>

Keith Thomas cites the same biological basis as Goreau for what he refers to as the double standard. He defines the double standard as "the reflection of the view that men have property in women and that the value of this property is immeasurably diminished if the woman at any time has sexual relations with anyone other than her husband" (210). He suggests, though, that "the double standard derives from something more than fear of bastard children" (209). He prefers to say that the origin of anxiety over women's chastity is in the "desire of men for absolute property in women" (210). Thomas explains that because women were men's property, adultery was an improper use by a man of another man's property. "Female chastity has been seen as a matter of property; not, however, the property of

legitimate heirs, but the property of men in women" (209-10). But this seems to naturalize men's requirements for women without accounting for the function of that property. Do women have intrinsic worth for men? Or do they have a certain function, a certain exchange value? I think that Thomas unnecessarily forecloses the possibility that "absolute property" includes "the fear of bastard children," though perhaps it is not reducible to it. While Thomas claims to be asserting only possible questions rather than answers, he concludes that "it may be that all the details of the double standard are mere elaborations of the central fact that when a man and a woman have sexual relations the woman may conceive whereas the man will not" (216). What I take away from Thomas' article is that aristocratic women's sexual behavior is always constructed in relationship to its status as her husband's property (and as it generates property and inheritors for her husband). Chastity--virginity before marriage and loyal sexuality afterwards--therefore enhances a wife's status as her husband's property, which in turn underwrites her husband's status.

The discursive connections between silence and chastity constitute one of the fields of women's place as property. Patricia Parker, Karen Newman, and Peter Stallybrass have written articles that support the basis of a conservative reading without allowing it to slide into biological essentialism. (I should be clear that none of the three essays I will mention here treats *Mariam*.) Patricia Parker, for example, writes about the anxiety of a disparity between being and seeming on the part of women. This anxiety has to do with the desire for control of women's sexuality: "concern that this secret or 'privie' place [of women] might become ... a 'common' place characterized in particular the anxieties of adultery, fear that a virgin, once opened, could not have her 'opening' controlled."<sup>26</sup> When a woman's virginity can no longer be

confirmed (or after she is married), the fear is that her sexual desire can be put into unchecked circulation, with no one able to determine whether or not chastity has been kept. Such “circulation” is checked by the “links between the two traditionally associated female orifices—closed or silent mouth and female ‘lap’ or ‘privitie’—both suspect, and threatening, in their potential liberality” (70). Both Stallybrass and Newman point out the contemporary connection between public speech and prostitution (and thus silence and the chaste woman). Newman writes that “the slippage from the whore’s thirsty mouth to her insatiable genitals is a commonplace. The talking woman is everywhere equated with a voracious sexuality.”<sup>27</sup> Peter Stallybrass makes the same connections, using Bakhtin’s distinction between grotesque (open-circulating) and classical (closed) bodies. Stallybrass asserts that chastity is a means by which “‘woman’, unlike man, is produced as a *property* category” (127). He is clear that this category works to uphold class distinctions: “the differentiation of women [into different classes] simultaneously establishes or reinforces the differentiation of men. The deployment of women into different classes, then, is in the interests of the ruling elite, because it helps to perpetuate and to naturalize class structure” (133). The conscription of biological difference therefore aids the naturalization of class structure since it produces gender cohesion. Chastity and silence therefore is “a means of establishing social purity through bodily purity” (125).

My reading of the play will be strategically, rather than naively or unproblematically “conservative.” (In fact, I suggest that the label “conservative” is misleading.) That is to say, I appreciate what is lost while fashioning a reading of *Mariam* that deviates from the collective efforts of feminist critics to read the play as radical, or praise it as subversive. Yet the “conservative” reading allows for a different trajectory in criticism, one that

does not start or end with an unhistoricized notion that women are “autonomous.” I do not want an analysis of “chastity” to allow it to naturalize into a “social virtue.” Chastity is primarily of economic benefit for the aristocracy, as a means of using “virtue” as symbolic capital in negotiating class status.

As a case in point, I turn now to the chorus at the conclusion of act 3, the part of the play that has been the proving ground of the anti-conservative interpretation of *Mariam*. It is of central importance to my argument as well because, when read conservatively, it is a clear expression that wives (Mariam in particular) should be chaste, silent, and obedient, as their status as property would dictate. Speech of any kind is considered by the chorus as an act interchangeable with adultery. Goreau reads the chorus “straight,” that is, as an ideological artifact *supporting* the injunction against women’s speech, which she ascribes to the author’s own point of view (13-14). There is not a critic other than Goreau willing to offer a wholly conservative view of the act 3 chorus and its implications for the action of the play.

As my discussion of the critical analysis of this chorus will show, the anti-conservative reading inspects this passage most closely, reading the chorus against the grain, asserting that it is contradictory, ambiguous, and that it provides the possibility of a “whole” identity for woman apart from her husband. Ferguson writes that “Goreau ... fails to consider the ways in which both the rhetoric of the speech and its larger dramatic context render this extreme prescription of wifely self-censorship problematic”<sup>28</sup> Ferguson thus superimposes her quest for the autonomous woman who fights “self-censorship” onto the character of Mariam, a character whose tragic flaw is the conjunction of her chastity and her speech. I believe that in the “larger dramatic context,” the chorus in fact serves as the rationale for Mariam’s



death. But Ferguson sees the chorus as "*Mariam* 's extremely ambivalent ideological statement about women as male 'property'" (58). Criticism on this passage ranges from taking it at face value to insisting that it is "puzzling" (Belsey 173). Beilen argues that "the Third Chorus ensures that there is a complete separation between *Mariam* and established authority" (170), thereby constructing *Mariam* as successfully transgressive against the course of the conventional wisdom of the play.

The strongest comment that critics are able to make about the play is that it is "ambiguous"—it isn't clearly anything. In fact, Ferguson asserts that "what is radical" in the play "must be inferred or teased out" (57) by a reader predisposed to see this as a subversive text. Ferguson and Raber read the chorus for its "inconsistencies," trying to find a way to qualify the very (what we could determine to be) misogynistic sentiment of the chorus. Ferguson claims that the chorus is "contradictory" (52) because she argues there are differing definitions of chastity developed in the course of the 6 stanzas, sometimes physical, sometimes discursive. Even though she also seems to acknowledge the material basis of the stricture that links physical chastity with silence (52-3), she finds signs of sexual "withholding" (52) rather than license, which is what is at stake in the play. Catherine Gallagher has also read the chorus as a means by which female self-expression is protected. Reading the third chorus, Gallagher writes, "As Lady Carey explained, the idea of a public mind in a private body threatened to fragment female identity, to destroy its integrated wholeness."<sup>29</sup> However, I would assert that in the course of the play, and expressed unambiguously in the chorus, "the idea of a public mind in a private body" threatens to make the wife's *body* public as well. Gallagher reads the wife's act of giving the self "wholly" away to her husband as an act of protecting "her complete self-identity" (70), but the

problem, as the chorus points out, is that the wife does not have a self identity that is not always already her husband's.

Weller and Ferguson suggest in the introduction to their edition of the play that this chorus is evidence that "Mariam's object of desire, if she has one, is autonomy" (36). Raber, on the lookout for Mariam's autonomous "self," finds that the chorus has a "logical incoherence" (326). Like Ferguson, she is looking not at the connections between speech and chastity (even though she also acknowledges them), but at the disjunction between them which gives rise to Mariam's "self." She concludes that "the chorus is unable finally to locate any position, speaking or silent, private or public, that would be acceptable in a wife" (326). Yet, it seems to me that, if anything, the chorus is overly careful about defining its terms and connections of speech and chastity to the problems of legitimacy. Read through Mariam's construction as property, the chorus outlines her proper behavior.

In *Mariam*, the choruses appear to act as expressions of normativity. They dispense social wisdom and serve as an author-function to direct the flow of interpretation for the reader by reinterpreting the actions of the characters in strictly moral terms that are consonant with Herod's legitimate power as ruler. The chorus serves as the didactic repository for the conventional understanding of the play. As an alternate to reading the chorus as normative, Weller and Ferguson suggest that it is to be read as an unreliable character, that it "mis"leads readers to conclusions that the text of the dramatic action undermines.<sup>30</sup> The anxiety is that if the choruses are read as the normative commentary on the action, then Mariam is rather villanized. It would also suggest that women writers are problematic. Again, this concern is precipitated by an understandable desire to protect the seventeenth-century woman author of the play. But as I will show in my

final section, Graphina serves as a counter-balance to this particular anxiety.

It is important to note that this chorus, which is fraught with the insistence that a wife's body and thoughts are the property of her husband only, occurs immediately after Mariam has been talking alone with Sohemus. While it is clear to the reader that their exchange has been completely innocent, the problem, as the chorus will point out, is that she felt she had the freedom to be alone with him in the first place and that, without a witness to their conversation, there is no legible guarantee that it was innocent. Even Sohemus notes this after Mariam leaves. "Vnbridled speech is Mariams worst disgrace, / And will indanger her without desart" (1186-7), he says, even as he calls her a "chast Queene" (1208). His assertion of her chastity is important, since Herod will accuse her of being Sohemus' lover. He has already denied this accusation, and the audience has seen that there is no such inappropriateness between them. Therefore, the chorus starts out in recognition that even though Mariam's actual innocence isn't sufficient:

Tis not enough for one that is a wife  
 To keepe her spotles from an act of ill:  
 But from suspition she should free her life,  
 And bare her selfe of power as well as will.  
 Tis not so glorious for her to be free,  
 As by her proper sselfe restrain'd to bee. (1219-24)

In order to be "spotles," a wife must be free from "suspition," power, and will. In the play, giving up will becomes very important for women to do and necessary for men not to do because it has to do with gender-appropriate power. Salome claims that "Impudencie ... bids me worke my will without delay" (304-5) and that "My will shall be to me in stead of Law" (468). At the end of the play, Herod blames Mariam's death on his forgetting his place in the marriage: "Oh neuer had I: had I had my will, / Sent forth command,

that *Mariam* should haue died" (2101-2). The chorus suggests that in a marriage, only the husband should act on power and will.

The second stanza even asserts that women shouldn't exercise what freedoms they do have. The chorus again claims that just fulfilling the letter of the law isn't enough, that she should do more than just "forbeare alone, / Those things that may her honour ouerthrowe":

When she hath spacious ground to walke vpon,  
 Why on the ridge should she desire to goe?  
 It is no glory to forbeare alone,  
 Those things that may her honour ouerthrowe.  
 But tis thanke-worthy, if she will not take  
 All lawfull liberties for honours sake. (1225-30)

The chorus suggests that her allowed sphere of action is sufficient and she should not take risks in her behavior. The third stanza, clearly outlines which actions should be carefully avoided in order to save her reputation ("her fame"):

That wife her hand against her fame doth reare,  
 That more then to her Lord alone will giue  
 A priuate word to any second eare,  
 And though she may with reputation liue.  
 Yet though most chast, she doth her glory blot,  
 And wounds her honour, though she killes it not. (1231-6)

Reading this stanza as inconsistent, Ferguson claims that the chorus does not speak from a position of authority. The chorus appears to offer conflicting definitions of chastity because according to this stanza, a wife can speak to more than her husband yet still be "chast." Therefore, Ferguson claims that "the virtue being advocated is quite distinct from the possession of physical chastity."<sup>31</sup> But the point of the chorus is that speaking inappropriately indicates the likelihood of sexual transgression. What the chorus is actually pointing out is the problem between being and not seeming: she might be

physically chaste, yet her “priuate word to any second eare” (the first ear being the husband’s) still “wound[s] her honour.” She can be chaste, but if she doesn’t also seem to be chaste, then her glory is blotted anyway because her inappropriate speech threatens to negate her actual chastity.

The fourth stanza more directly links public speech with unchastity and shows that the condition of marriage makes silence in women necessary. There are certain property issues in marriage, the primary one, in this chorus, the husband’s control of the wife in body, mind, thought, and speech:

When to their Husbands they themselves doe bind,  
 Doe they not wholly giue themselues away?  
 Or giue they but their body, not their mind,  
 Reseruing that though best, for others pray?  
 No sure, their thoughts no more can be their owne,  
 And therefore should to none but one be knowne. (1237-42)

Because a woman’s body and mind is wholly given away, not even what she thinks is truly her own—if she shares it, she must share it only with the “one” (her husband). Belsey and Ferguson posit that perhaps those lines mean that the wife should keep her thoughts completely to herself, thereby maintaining a sense of self, as Raber argues.<sup>32</sup> The “one” to whom those thoughts should be known is then herself. But the next to the last line of the stanza clearly asserts that her thoughts *cannot* be her own. While these critics focus on the thoughts of the wife, it is clear that the chorus means speech spoken aloud. Stanza 3 demands that she not give “A priuate word to any second eare,” and in lines 1251-2 below the chorus points out that a wife shouldn’t *speak* to anyone but her husband, since they mention filling ears with speech: “When any’s eares but one therewith they fill, / Doth in a sort her purenes ouerthrow.” This stricture also extends even to her speaking in public, once again picking up on the language of illegitimacy (usurpation): “Then she

vsurpes vpon anothers right, / That seekes to be by publike language grac't"  
(1243-4). Public language is her husband's prerogative.

The next stanza of the chorus claims that the content of those thoughts shared with a "second ear" are immaterial:

And though her thoughts reflect with purest light,  
Her mind if not peculiar is not chaste.  
For in a wife it is no worse to finde,  
A common body, then a common minde. (1245-8)

A mind that can be shared is—here—the same offense as sharing the body. This is the strongest statement the chorus makes about the problems of women's speech. Having a common mind, one shared verbally with a second ear, is "no worse" than adultery.

The final stanza makes it clear that Mariam's appearance of commonality is her downfall, indeed her only downfall:

And euery mind though free from thought of ill,  
That out of glory seekes a worth to show:  
When any's eares but one therewith they fill,  
Doth in a sort her purenes ouerthrow.  
Now *Mariam* had, (but that to this she bent)  
Beene free from feare, as well as innocent. (1249-54)

This last line negates Mariam's innocence: before she spoke, she was clearly pure; now her purity is not apparent. What the chorus is then asserting is that being and seeming precipitate each other, or that one has the ability to displace the other: if Mariam doesn't seem to be, she isn't (*even though* she is). The chorus here asserts that appearances stand for what's underneath. The problem occurs when what's "true" is accessible only through appearances—especially in the case of chastity.<sup>33</sup>

Too often, this chorus' position as the commentator on Mariam's crime is ignored. In criticism, Mariam's death is therefore unexplained.

Indeed, critics have a hard time reading the ending of the play because they are determined to read this chorus as contradictory or ambiguous. The bottom line is that Mariam does indeed go against these prescriptions. She does speak in public, and she is chaste even though she appears not to be. The proving ground, though, is what this means for our interpretation of Mariam herself—is she therefore free from the sentiment of the chorus because there appears to be a “contradiction” in it? Or does her death signal the (unfortunate) punishment for her transgressing the role she is required to play as a wife?

## II. Divorce and Legitimacy

When the third chorus is set in the “larger dramatic context”<sup>34</sup> of the play, it accounts for the anxiety of legitimacy that surround Mariam through controversies of chastity. The conservative reading suggests that a threat of unchastity equals a threat to the property ownership of the wife by the husband, including the paternity of her offspring. In this play, an additional complication of the terms of legitimacy involves competing legacies introduced by divorce.<sup>35</sup> If Mariam is the nexus of Herod’s legitimacy, then that is threatened by Herod’s divorced wife Doris and their son Antipater.<sup>36</sup> Divorce is a barometer of legitimacy and, along with her transgressive speech, makes Mariam (like Salome) vulnerable to accusations against her chastity.

There are two instances where divorce is activated in the play. The first, which I have alluded to already, is Salome’s desire to divorce Constabarus. It is tempting to temper Salome’s villainy with her willingness to go against common strictures (especially those involving her place in patriarchy) while ignoring the representation of her unchecked sexuality and

speech. Salome laments, in a much-quoted passage from the play, the inequity of not being able to divorce Constabarus, though he could divorce her:

If he to me did beare as Earnest hate,  
As I to him, for him there were an ease,  
A separating bill might free his fate:  
From such a yoke that did so much displease. (311-14)

Her next lines suggest her awareness of the the philosophical causes of that inequality. She points out the apparent illogic of allowing men the right to divorce, but not women:

Why should such priuiledge to man be giuen?  
Or giuen to them, why bard from women then?  
Are men then we in greater grace with Heauen?  
Or cannot women hate as well as men? (315-8)

The answer to the third question is yes, in a religious order that upholds a God-man-woman hierarchy. In that case, men are indeed in “greater grace with Heauen.” And the fourth question is implicitly answered by Constabarus’ later speech: a woman shouldn’t hate as “well” as man; if she does, she is probably unnatural. Then Salome establishes a self-consciousness of her radicalness: “He be the custome-breaker: and beginne / To shew my Sexe the way to freedomes doore” (319-20). But through a series of patriarchal controls, Salome isn’t even free herself.

Within the context of the play, Salome’s villany is illustrated by her arrogant usurpation of men’s social rights. One element of the context of Salome’s divorce speech are the lines immediately preceeding it. She declares that since her first husband’s (Josephus) death (which she planned), “shame was written on my tainted brow: / And certaine tis, that shame is honours foe” (293-94). She herself recognizes that she is an honorless woman. Then,



in what seems to me to be a clear signal to the audience how to read her divorce speech, Salome says

shame is gone, and honour wipt away,  
 And Impudencie on my forehead sits :  
 She bids me worke my will without delay,  
 And for my will I will imploy my wits. (303-6)

Her desire to divorce is then signalled as an impudent and shameful act of will.

The first counter to Salome's desire for divorce is Constabarus' reaction to her announcement. He employs the standard early modern trope of the world being turned upside-down in the face of such unnaturalness:

Are Hebrew women now trāsform'd to men?  
 Why do you not as well our battels fight,  
 And weare our armour ? suffer this, and then  
 Let all the world be topsie turued quite.  
 Let fishes graze, beastes, swine, and birds descend,<sup>37</sup>  
 Let fire burne downewards whilst the earth aspires. (435-40)

Women who could divorce are not women but are "trāsform'd to men," and such usurpation by women would be reflected in a sympathetic chaos in the natural world. It is therefore possible to talk about Constabarus' naturalization of social roles into gendered ones as the standard patriarchal reply and therefore interrogate its assumptions on the grounds that Cary puts it there in order to be subversive.<sup>38</sup> Yet, it is just as possible to talk about it as the serious conventional reply to the sort of (chaotic) social order that Salome proposes. What Constabarus points to here is that the natural order of things is perverted once women start playing the roles legally sanctioned for men only. In this way, then, Salome becomes like Lady Macbeth who calls to the spirits to "unsex" her, to "Stop up th' access and passage to remorse, / That no compunctious visitings of nature / Shake my fell purpose" (*Macbeth* 1.5.41-

3). A woman's desire to undermine her appropriate role goes hand-in-hand with her desire to subvert her "natural sex," and therefore, as Constabarus makes clear, the natural order of the world. In fact, his language in that passage is reminiscent of the Genesis creation story (the sense of ordered place that belongs to all the animals and the various natural phenomena), a narrative that also traditionally serves as evidence that women are inferior to men.<sup>39</sup>

Salome's clamoring for a divorce, and thus her potential transgression, is moot by the end of the play because Constabarus is executed.<sup>40</sup> But even before that point, Salome's outspokenness is papered over by a duel between Constabarus and Silleus. While it seems that Salome is the sought prize in the duel between Silleus and Constabarus, the fight creates bonds between men and enables the exchange of women to allocate men's social roles,<sup>41</sup> especially since Constabarus claims that he doesn't fight for Salome, but rather because Silleus has called him a coward, and he fights to "discharge a cowards stile" [903]). Yet the outcome of the fight determines what happens to Salome, with Constabarus conceding his right to Silleus:

What needsst thou for *Salome* to fight,  
Thou hast her, and may'st keepe her, none strives for her:  
I willingly to thee resigne my right,  
For in my very soule I do abhorre her. (914-7)

Salome's fate, despite her vehement protestations, is nevertheless decided by her husband to whom she belongs, without even requiring her presence.

When we come to Doris and Mariam's contest over their children's legitimacy, we are already positioned to see divorce as a contested site of proprietary rights—one that successfully remains the prerogative of men even after being challenged by a woman. But Salome's isn't the only divorce represented in the text. Doris' relationship to Herod vis-à-vis their divorce

and the questions it raises about legitimacy implicates Mariam as an adulteress. If Doris and Herod's divorce is not recognized, then Mariam is not a maid, a wife, or a widow—the only position she would rightfully occupy is that of whore. Mariam is the proving ground of legitimacy in the play—Herod marries her in order to legitimate his Jewish rule, and she is also that which must provide sons for the continuance of that legitimacy.<sup>42</sup> Beginning with the first paragraphs of the Argument, it is clear that the marriage/divorce plots as they relate to right rule is foremost in the opening context of the play:

*HErod the sonne of Antipater ... hauing crept ... into the Iewish Monarchie, married Mariam the daughrer<sup>43</sup> of Hircanus , the rightfull King and Priest , and for her ... hee reputiated Doris , his former Wife, by whome hee had Children.*

*This Mariam had a Brother called Aristobulus , and next him and Hircanus his Graund-father, Herod in his Wiues right had the best title. Therefore to remooue them, he charged the first with treason: and put him to death; and drowned the second vnder colour of sport.*  
(2-13)

This passage shows Herod's concern with his rule: he wants it unchallenged, and so he removes his potential challengers. Therefore, as the Argument notes, he has the "best title"—but only because of Mariam.

Alexandra (Mariam's mother) points out that it is only because of Mariam that Herod is on the Jewish throne, and that without her, he would be an illegitimate ruler. Alexandra links Herod with Esau through racialized epithets, calling Herod a "Base Edomite the damned Esaus heire" (89). This genealogy resonates with questions about legitimacy and birthright, since Esau notoriously gave up his birthright for a bowl of stew.<sup>44</sup> Alexandra continues to denigrate and de-legitimate Herod's rule via his own lineage:

*... our forefather Abram was asham'd:  
To see his seat with such a toade disgrac'te,*

That seat that hath by *Iudas* race bene fain'd ....  
 What kingdomes right could cruell *Herod* claime,  
 Was he not *Esaus* Issue, heyre of hell?  
 Then what succession can he haue but shame?  
 Did not his Ancestor his birth-right sell? (93-5, 104-7)

Alexandra figures Herod as an interloper in their lineage that that he cannot claim "kingdomes right." But Mariam defends Herod by pointing out that this concern about his rule is strengthened by his attention to his own offspring by Mariam, thereby reclaiming, if not Herod's legitimacy, then at least that of her sons who, she is careful to point out, are descended from David himself. In doing so, she also delegitimizes Antipater, Herod's son by Doris:

[Herod] not a whit his first borne sonne esteem'd,  
 Because as well as his he was not mine:  
 My children onely for his owne he deem'd,  
 These boyes that did descend from royall line.  
 These did he stile his heyres to *Dauids* throne. (140-4)

Of course, these lines also point to Herod's vested interest in not only his own rule, but the continued legitimacy of his rule. Therefore, his children by Mariam, the queen of the Jews, must be on the throne, not his "illegitimate" child by Doris.

Yet, Doris asserts that because she is Herod's *first* wife it is she who is his lawful wife. She therefore insists that it is her child that should be next in line. Doris is motivated by the report of Herod's death (though it proves to be false in act 4), which means that a new ruler must be made available. She readies Antipater for the role:

And thee my Boy, whose birth though greate it were,  
 Yet haue they after fortunes prou'd but poore:  
 When thou wert borne how little did I feare  
 Thou shouldst be thrust from forth thy Fathers doore.  
 Are thou not *Herods* right begotten Sonne?

VWas not the haples *Doris* , *Herods* wife? (780-5)

Doris highlights Antipater's "great birth" that makes him "*Herods* right begotten Sonne." Antipater himself recognizes this, and in a strikingly seditious passage, calls for the subversion of Mariam and her line:

Each mouth within the Citie loudly cries  
That *Herods* death is certaine: therefore wee  
Had best some subtill hidden plot devise,  
That *Mariams* children might subuerted bee,  
By poisons drinke, or else by murtherous Knife,  
So we may be aduanc'd, it skills not how:  
They are but Bastards, you were *Herods* wife,  
And foule adultery blotteth *Mariams* brow. (824-31)

Antipater voices the Catholic position on divorce. He claims a divorce such as Herod's from his mother shouldn't be legally recognized and subsequent marriages by the divorcees are adulterous cohabitation. Therefore, Antipater is able to assert that Mariam's children "are but Bastards ... And foule adultery blotteth *Mariams* brow."

When Doris and Mariam meet, their exchange is completely focused around questions of whose marriage is legitimate, and whose children should be on the throne. The confrontations ends with the two women cursing each other's children, appropriately enough, since their children bear the mark of competing legitimacies. Doris insists to Mariam that "You in adultery liu'd nine yeare together, / And heau'n will neuer let adultery in" (1851-2). Not knowing yet who Doris is, Mariam mistakes her words, thinking that like Herod, Doris is accusing her of unchastity. Mariam calls her "Some spirit sent to driue me to dispaire: / Who sees for truth that Mariam is vntrue, / If faire she be, she is as chaste as faire" (1854-6). The conflation here of remarriage-as-adultery and unchastity-as-adultery shows that both are variations on the ways a woman can transgress her place in a marriage. But Doris reveals who

she is, and reclaims the legitimacy of her marriage to Herod, again calling herself his "lawfull wife" (1858). Mariam claims innocence and reminds Doris that supposedly, Herod divorced Doris because he loved Mariam better.

She asks:

Was that adultery: did not Moses say,  
That he that being matcht did deadly hate:  
Might by permission put his wife away,  
And take a more belou'd to be his mate? (1861-4)

Doris answers that there wasn't any reason for Herod to divorce her, since she had all that was worthy: "riches ... noble birth ... tender youth," and finally she asserts her own purity: "no staine did *Doris* honour dim" (1865-8). Her curse on Mariam's children also reflects her position that it is Antipater, not Mariam's children who should inherit the throne: she calls for god to

Stretch thy reuenging arme: thrust forth thy hand,  
And plague the mother much: the children worse.  
Throw flaming fire vpon the baseborne heads  
That were begotten in vnlawfull beds ....  
And *Mariam* , I doe hope this boy of mine  
Shall one day come to be the death of thine. (1889-2, 1897-8)

The problem divorce presents in the play is the same problem as unchastity: it causes questions about legitimacy and creates competing patriarchal legacies in the case of Doris and Mariam. Historically speaking, Doris' curse is prophetic: Mariam's children are put to death and Antipater and Herod rule together.<sup>45</sup> But that is beyond the scope of the play. If the divorce problematic has to fit with the conservative reading of the dramatic context, it would appear that Doris has been slighted by Herod, and that as his oldest son, Antipater is the legitimate son (though his is not of the "best title," since Mariam is not his mother). Doris and Antipater are among those alive at the end of the play, which a conservative reading might assert is testament

to the continuance of the old social order. Because of Salome's desire for a divorce, and the subsequent patriarchal control of that desire, divorce has a negative status in the play, but to Mariam's detriment, not Doris'.

### III. "All that is spoke is marr'd"

Before considering Graphina as an antidote to the illegitimacy of Mariam's speech, it is necessary to fully consider the context in which Mariam speaks, how that speech is quantified and qualified by the other characters, and what the consequences are of her speech.

Critics are divided on the reason for Mariam's death. Responses run from Maureen Quilligan and Jonathan Goldberg's suggestions that Mariam chooses to die,<sup>6</sup> a means of seeing Mariam as an agent, to Raber's assertion that "it is difficult to tell what her crime has been" (338). Each of the critics I will cite here (with the exception of Goldberg) holds on to a notion of Mariam's autonomy or self-hood or agency which stands to threaten the patriarchal order. Belsey argues that Mariam stands, unified in herself, against her husband. She surmises that "the play as a whole makes clear that what brings about Mariam's death is not her openness with other people but her outspoken defiance of Herod himself .... Mariam is in danger because she speaks her thoughts to Herod" (173). Likewise, Krontiris writes that "there is some ambiguity with respect to the ultimate causes of her death, but the play as a whole makes clear that Mariam ultimately dies primarily because she insists on remaining, in Belsey's phrase, 'a unified autonomous subject'" (83). Quilligan appears to agree with her: "Mariam is condemned to death by her husband Herod not so much because she is unchaste, as because she will not conform to his demands upon her mind" (225). The implication is that

Mariam's "sense of self" (presumably in that she refuses to "dissemble," to pander to Herod, or to forget, as Chorus 4 advises her to do, that Herod killed her grandfather and brother) keeps her from being subject to his rule, and is the very reason she dies (because she keeps that self from him). Ferguson points out that there are problems with claiming that "the final lines [of the act 3 chorus] seem to suggest that Mariam's tragic fate could have been averted had she refrained from speaking her mind to anyone other than her husband. But ... it is precisely because Mariam speaks her mind—not only to others but also, and above all, to her husband—that she loses her life .... The problem is that she *both* speaks too freely *and* refuses to give her body to Herod—its rightful owner, according to the chorus" (52).<sup>47</sup> This formulation appears to be completely opposite of the reason she dies: she speaks her thoughts with Sohemus, and in a public forum, as she herself notes, which usurps her husband's legal property rights.

My point in citing these critics at length is to show the range of reasons posited for Mariam's death. Not explored is the conservative position, which would show Mariam's role in the cause and effect of the play's structure. Mariam's crime in the play is not that she *keeps something of herself for herself* rather than surrendering it all to Herod; instead, she is accused of *giving something away* that should be Herod's alone. That "something" is of the utmost importance: her inappropriate speech indicates an easy slip to unchastity, which invalidates Herod as a ruler as well as a husband-property-owner. Mariam is never a "self" in the way critics want her to be; she is a means by which rule is legitimated and heirs are produced as property. She is reduced by the play to a biological function, which is why Herod can dispose of her so easily. Her refusal to be subject to Herod, her public speaking, her pride, her duplicity—all stand for her presumed unchastity.



There is ample evidence in the play that Mariam dies because of suspected adultery—like Desdemona. In fact, the plotline of Mariam is dependent on a previous accusation of unchastity: Weller and Ferguson note that previous to the action of the play, “out of ill will toward her sister-in-law, Salome told Herod that Josephus had committed adultery with Mariam. When Herod discovered that Josephus had revealed to Mariam the royal order to kill her if Herod died, he took this indiscretion as confirmation of Josephus’s guilt and ordered him to be slain” (64). This previous experience of Mariam is paradigmatic for the identical event in this play. We have already seen that her position as a second wife opens her to accusations of adultery by Doris. Time and time again in the play, it is remarked that chastity will be her downfall. Upon receiving the “poisoned” cup, Herod claims “for impuritie shall Mariam die” (1456) and then tells her “neuer wert thou chast” (1468). This is a clear assertion of crime and punishment by the person who has the power to act as judge and punisher. Even the argument notes that “The King ... more moued with Iealousie of *Sohemus* , then with this intent of poyson, sent her away, and presently after by the instigation of *Salome*, she was beheaded” (49-52). Therefore, the threat that Mariam may have been unchaste is more anathema to him than even her pretention to the throne, a notion which Herod confirms when he says to Mariam:

Hadst thou complotted *Herods* massacre,  
That so thy sonne a Monarch might be stiled,  
Not halfe so grieuous such an action were,  
As once to thinke, that *Mariam* is defilde. (1471-4)

Mariam’s hypothetical desire to put her son on the throne and have Herod killed is not as bad a transgression as adultery—after all, if their son is put on the throne, legitimacy is still enacted, but if Mariam compromises her sexuality, it is then forever questionable.

The point of the chorus at the end of act 3 is that it is never enough to simply *be* chaste, but one must be and *seem to be* chaste as well. Duplicity (seeming to be something one isn't) in the play connotes sexual license. In several points in the play, Mariam and Salome are linked as a result of their duplicity, most obviously signified by Herod's slip of "Mariam" when he means to say "Salome." He claims that "The thought of *Mariam* doth so steale my spirit, / My mouth from speech of her I cannot weane" (1345-6). Act 1's chorus seemingly damns Salome, but actually refers to Mariam. The chorus admonishes that "no content attends a wauering minde" (513), and that "To wish varietie is signe of grieve" (526), yet makes clear that it refers to Mariam in its condemnation.<sup>46</sup> The two women are also linked by various images. They are both associated with impudency (304 and 1459), which signifies the fear of their duplicity. Constabarus tells Silleus that Salome

... meerly is a painted sepulcher,  
That is both faire, and vilely foule at once:  
Though on her out-side graces garnish her,  
Her mind is fild with worse then rotten bones. (880-3)

Herod claims the same for Mariam, especially once the "poisoned cup" is brought to him and he believes immediately that she has been false with Sohemus. The Butler's surmise that Sohemus has told of the king's command to kill her should he die is proof of her unchastity, and therefore her duplicity. Herod's belief in her duplicity is apparent in this scene:

Now doe I know thy falshood, painted Diuill  
Thou white Inchantres. Oh thou art so foule,  
That Ysop cannot clense thee worst of euill.  
A beautious body hides a loathsome soule ....  
Bright workmanship of nature sulli'd ore,  
With pitched darknes (1439-442, 1475-6)

Constabarus exhorts Salome to "seeke to be both chast and and chastly

deem'd" (408) so that she could be "a vertuous woman" (406) "of honest fame" (405). Likewise, it is because Mariam isn't "both chaste and chastly deem'd" that she dies.

The problems of duplicity create part of the anxiety in this play, beginning with the first scenes between Herod and Mariam. The problem in Mariam's interaction with Herod seems paradoxical to discuss with duplicity since she claims she *won't* hide herself from him. The problem here is that Mariam both is and seems to be upset with Herod: "My Lord, I suit my garment to my minde, / And there no cheerfull colours can I finde" (1354-5), she tells him. And of course, it seems admirable that she is both being and seeming, since her unwillingness to pretend to be happy to see the murderer of her brother and grandfather seems to be evidence of her honesty and innocence: "I cannot frame disguise, nor neuer taught / My face a looke dissenting from my thought" (1407-8). Yet this refusal only makes it easier for Herod to believe that she has cheated on him, since he feels that she is lying to him about Sohemus. Her denial is only further evidence of her supposed duplicity. She seems to be and is the wrong thing, especially because, like Desdemona, her lack of dissembling manifests itself in her speech. Her speech then (both by its existence and in content) literally challenges social hierarchies, because it implicates her in certain (unchaste) associations with other people. Herod doesn't see her talking to Sohemus alone, but he believes that she is capable of inappropriate speech, so he immediately believes that she would commit adultery with Sohemus. In the poison scene, Herod understands her falseness because of Sohemus. In that very section, with dizzying speed, he calls for Sohemus' death, he claims that Sohemus is Mariam's lover, and her denial of it only solidifies his belief that he is. At the end of that same scene, he calls for (and recants, calls for and recants several

times, torn between his love for her and his fear of her sexuality) Mariam's death.

The assertion of Mariam's problematic sexuality is analogized by her problematic speech, since the two problems circularly indicate each other. Critics who fail to account for the particularities of the transgression of Mariam's speech don't consider the ways in which it is threatening--not just in itself, but for what it signifies. Thus, it is confusing when critics claim that Mariam "chastely and properly restricts her speech to her husband's ear"<sup>49</sup> when it is clear that she does not, as she speaks to Sohemus alone, and even recognizes the public and problematic use of her speech in her very first soliloquy. Alone on the stage, she speaks a long monologue that begins with an acknowledgement of her transgression. Her first line is often quoted: "How oft haue I with publike voyce runne on?" She ends up dismissing her speech by claiming that her sex has caused her to make mistakes as she speaks aloud:

now I doe recant, and *Roman* Lord [Julius Caesar]  
Excuse too rash a judgement in a woman:  
My Sexe pleads pardon, pardon then afford,  
Mistaking is with vs, but too too common. (5-8)

These connections are coalesced in *Mariam*, as I have already partly tried to show, especially because the exchanges between Doris and Mariam are concerned with the legitimacy of their sexual ties to Herod and with their children. That Mariam's chastity posits the greatest threat to Herod vis-à-vis his rule is evident in that it is the very reason he decides to kill her since her wayward chastity is implicated in her transgressive speech. The critics I cited above would not agree with this conservative reading, most of them preferring to believe that, since the audience knows her to be chaste, that it isn't her chastity that is the exact cause of her death.

Salome plots Mariam's death by planning to accuse her of adultery. The issues therein revolve around the question of legitimacy. Salome refers to her role in the previous time Mariam was accused of adultery by Herod, saying that

Tis true indeed, I did the plots reueale,  
That past betwixt your faavorites and you:  
I ment not I, a traytor to conceale.  
Thus *Salome* your Mynion *Ioseph* slue. (255-8)

Her assertion that Mariam is a traitor is important, not only because it refers to Mariam's alleged disobedience to her husband, but because unchastity would literally be treason, since it would make the legitimacy of the rule of the king suspect. But Mariam puts the blame of adultery back on Salome, calling her assertions "Infamy":

... had not *Salomes* vnstedfast heart,  
In *Iosephus* stead her *Constabarus* plast,  
To free her selfe, she had not vsde the art,  
To slander haplesse *Mariam* for vnchast. (263-6)

Mariam acknowledges the saliency of the accusation, though it is nevertheless "slander." The pattern of accusation of adultery she here identifies becomes prophetic.

Constabarus also sees what Salome will do: recognizing that he holds Josephus' place in Salome's next plot, he admits that

The sweet fac'd *Mariam* as free from guilt  
As Heauen from spots, yet had her Lord come backe  
Her purest blood had bene vniustly spilt.  
And *Salome* it was would worke her wracke. (501-4)

Therefore, Salome's plot will work to her advantage: with Mariam gone, she will be rid of her greatest enemy. She decides to assert that she'll convince Herod that Mariam wants to kill him in order to take over the

throne:

First Iealousie, if that auaille not, feare  
 Shalbe my minister to worke her end:  
 A common error moues not *Herods* eare,  
 Which doth so firmly to his *Mariam* bend.  
 She shall be charged with so horrid crime,  
 As *Herods* feare shall turne his loue to hate:  
 Ile make some sweare that she desires to clime,  
 And seekes to poyson him for his estate. (1089-96)

But of course, Salome doesn't have to accuse Mariam of wanting his throne. Thanks to the "poison" Salome sends in, attributed to Mariam, Herod immediately decides that she is unchaste and therefore that his throne is indeed in danger. The two things that she threatens to accuse Mariam of are really implicated in each other, inseparable for the representation of an aristocratic woman's sexual role as a conduit for legitimacy.

Before Herod calls for her death he makes the connections between her speech, her actions, and her suspect sexuality clear: Herod believes her to be unchaste. He puts her crime in terms of legitimacy, deciding in the end that she is a "false creature" (1491) and a "vsurper":

Thou shalt not liue faire fiend to cozen more,  
 With heauy semblance, as thou cousnedst mee.  
 Yet must I loue thee in despight of death,  
 And thou shalt die in the dispight of loue ...  
 And with vsurpers name I *Mariam* staine. (1477-80, 1494)

Herod's assertion that Mariam has cozened him carries more than just the sense of him being tricked, but has the same implications as a husband who has been cuckolded as a bit of trickery. He ends the speech with the recognition that the real problem is Mariam's pretension to undermine his rule, both as king and as husband through her unchastity and her improper speech by acting as her own owner. His insistence that she is a usurper makes

the necessity and cause of her death clear.

Even though Herod oscillates between having her killed and not, it is always the thought that she has been impure that cements his resolve. Her history of unbridled speech causes Herod to believe Salome readily when she convinces him Mariam committed adultery with Sohemus. In fact, unlike Othello, Herod needs very little convincing—testament to Herod’s outrageous impetuosity, but also to the plausibility of the assertion. His first reaction is always to believe the accusation that Mariam is unchaste. One of the most telling vacillations, one that shows explicitly how Salome is able to cement his resolve has Mariam’s sexual property as an anchor. Salome plays Herod’s game of trying to remember what the exact fault of Mariam is, the reason she should be sentenced to death: Salome reminds Herod that “foule dishonors do her forehead blot” (1678), referring of course to her apparent lack of chastity. Herod, seemingly resolved, says:

Then let her die, tis very true indeed,  
 And for this fault alone shall *Mariam* bleed.  
*Sal.* What fault my Lord? *Herod.* What fault ist? ...  
 If you be ignorant, I know of none. (1679-82)

Yet Salome reminds him, in a passage that combines concerns about Mariam’s speech, chastity, lineage and also her duplicity (seeming to be something she isn’t), of what her fault in fact is:

She speaks a beautious language, but within  
 Her heart is false as powder: and her tongue  
 Doth but allure the auditors to sinne,  
 And is the instrument to doe you wrong. (1701-4)

Her speech belies deceit, which “allures” the hearer to sin and the “wrongs” would seem to be not only her defamation of his character but also the suspicion of his rule via her sexuality. As though Salome had awoken him

from complacency, Herod verifies what she says: "It may be so: nay, tis so: shee's vnchaste, / Her mouth will ope to eu'ry strangers eare" (1705-6) in a statement that clearly denotes the link between the history of Mariam's speech and the history of her alleged unchastity. From this point in the play, Herod vacillates only one more time about whether or not to order her death, and Salome finally cements his resolve by reminding him of his greatest fear:

Then youle no more remember what hath past,  
*Sohemus* loue, and hers shall be forgot:  
 Tis well in truth: that fault may be her last,  
 And she may mend, though yet she loue you not. (1741-4)

Salome's reverse psychology also points to an anxiety that Mariam's death will alleviate: the fear that Mariam could be adulterous again. The reference to *Sohemus* causes Herod to be resolute:

Oh God: tis true. *Sohemus* : earth and heau'n,  
 Why did you both conspire to make me curst:  
 In cousning me with showes, and proofes vneu'n?  
 She showed the best, and yet did proue the worst. (1745-8)

Like Desdemona, Mariam must learn to use her speech appropriately; otherwise she will be accused of improper behavior, including adultery. But she knows this. In her last scene before her death, she hints that she has learned her lesson: "Now death will teach me" (1803) she says. The messenger reporting her death pointedly tells Herod that her speech is no longer a problem. First, because "Her body is diuided from her head" (2032), she can no longer speak. Second, what she did say reflects her new-found support of the social hierarchy: "Tell thou my Lord thou saw'st me loose my breath" (2015) are Mariam's last words as reported by the Nuntio. These final words resonate with Desdemona's final request of Emilia, "Commend my to my kind lord. O, farewell!" (V.ii.125). Marta Straznicky maintains that



Mariam's agency is reasserted by her death, and that she only has the appearance of learning her lesson. Straznicky writes that the lines reporting that Mariam "make no answeare ... yet smilde, a dutifull, though scornefull smile" (1994), show that "at the moment of death Mariam has evidently tamed her unbridled tongue. But the "yet" of the last line carries a good deal of weight, signalling not so much a surrender of power as a transfer of its vehicle from voice to gesture" (130). Straznicky calls Mariam's message to Herod her "last act" (130), but the Nuntio is clear that her very last act is "she some silent praier had sed" (2026). Straznicky argues that Mariam's "scornefull smile" qualifies her reformed use of speech. But if we are reading causally, Mariam's beheading then must qualify her "scornefull smile." Both Desdemona and Mariam learn that the proper object of their speech must be their "lords," thereby righting the hierarchy that their speech had previously transgressed. Patricia Parker writes of Desdemona's death: "The form of her death ... becomes the closing or stifling of her mouth, an act that makes explicit the links between the two orifices throughout, a symbolic 'close' both to her speech and to the assumed crime of sexual openness enacted on her wedding sheets" (71). The closure of both Desdemona's death and Mariam's is appropriate to their "crime."

Mariam's death is the condition that allows Herod to recant all the accusations against her. Herod's final speech, like Othello's, is about how beautiful and chaste Mariam was. He claims that "Tis I haue ouerthrowne your royall line" (2120), recognizing that it was through her that he gained legitimacy. He also realizes that she was indeed chaste, that her outside matched her inside. He calls her "chast *Mariam* " and asserts "I am deceiu'd, she past them all / In euery gift, in euery propertie" (2168-70). And finally he even seems to repent:

Her heau'nly beautie twas that made me thinke  
 That it with chastitie could neuer dwell:  
 But *now I see* that heau'n in her did linke,  
 A spirit and a person to excell. (2185-8, emphasis mine)

Here, Herod rehashes and absolves all the issues of the play: chastity, speech (which is importantly elided here, since her speech is no longer an issue), and being and seeming. But it is only after her death (the emphasized "now") that such absolution is possible.

The problem with both Herod and Othello is that they can't see what their wives are because what they seem to be can be variously interpreted. I'd re-emphasize that Iago's argument is less easily convincing for Othello-- Herod needs very little evidence that Mariam is unchaste. It may well be that this play is a warning about how men "see," and a warning to them not to be rash, as the final chorus will suggest to Herod. But within the play, the burden of proof always lies with the women since they are the ones that give the appearance of duplicity. Rather than see Herod's recanting as an admission of Mariam's innocence, I see it as a recognition that because she is dead, she truly is chaste, stressed by his understanding that because she is dead *now* he can see her purity.<sup>50</sup> Othello recognizes this also: "Cold, cold, my girl? / Even like thy chastity" (V.ii.275-6). Her chastity is cold because she is dead, but also because it was untested, since she was indeed chaste. If either Desdemona or Mariam were still alive, however, their chastity would be forever in question, and there would be no closure to the play.<sup>51</sup> As the final chorus mourns Mariam, it points out that "The guiltles *Mariam* is depriu'd of breath" (2209). I would assert causation there: she is guiltless *when* she is deprived of breath. Indeed, Mariam's death is the guarantee of her chastity.

This conservative reading would suggest that Mariam dies as punishment for her tragic flaw of inappropriate speech. Mariam is not

presented as a victim of her husband's will as is Desdemona. In *Mariam*, the tragedy is Mariam's—she is the one with the flaw, that one fault that precipitates her downfall. Herod is exonerated for his role in Mariam's death—it appears to be all her own doing. The final chorus does not condemn Herod for killing Mariam, it simply criticizes him for vacillating on his decision: “Had he with wisdom now her death delayed, / He at his pleasure might command her death” (2226-7). His responsibilities as a property owner are to be pleasurable; they take precedence over his characterization. If the third chorus is seen as explanation, after one site of Mariam's crime (talking to Sohemus), and immediately before Herod's triumphant re-entry into the city, then by the terms established in the play, Mariam is indeed “adulterous” so her death is indeed justified in terms of the crime she was accused of committing.<sup>32</sup> In this play, Mariam's death reifies chastity, silence and obedience as symbolic capital, and the patriarchal ideology in place to enforce that stricture. Graphina therefore serves as the perfect example of the unproblematic woman (so unproblematic as to be boring<sup>33</sup>).

#### IV. “All, all cry shame against me, yet I'll speak”

In her position against the other female characters in the play, Graphina serves the same purpose as Rustick in *Loves Victory* and Mall Mean-bred in *The Lady Contemplation*: she is the lower-class Other against whom the main female character is shaped. Like a pastoral shepherd, Graphina is not meant to stand as *representative* of her class. Rather, she is that blank Other than can sustain a strategic version of the mystification of social relations. However, there is an important difference, because Graphina is not ridiculed in *Mariam*; in fact, she is the author function, whereas Rustick and Mall are

pointedly excluded from the authorial worth their plays support. In this way, then, Graphina is more closely aligned with Musella and Lady Virtue because her marriage provides the appropriate closure to her story. If Mariam's transgressive speech necessitates her death because it threatens the social order, then Graphina's nontransgressive speech includes her in the maintenance of that social order. Graphina's "happy" fate (her desired marriage to Pheroras) operates conventionally as the fantasy of the slave girl who is rewarded for her simplicity and submission with marriage to a worthy man (wealthy and aristocratic) and inclusion in the social order at a higher status.<sup>54</sup> Like Lady Virtue, she comes through a liminal space of humility in order to be elevated because of it. Graphina's speech as well her position in the closure of the play is an alternate representation (one validated by the ideological loyalties of the play) to Mariam. Graphina serves as a model of an acceptable way not only to speak, but, as her name suggests, to write.

Ros Ballaster has pointed out that "Graphina's name invokes writing as a source of truth where speech ... appears to fail so dramatically for its female protagonist" (273). Goldberg likewise notes that she allegorizes the mark of the female writer (172). Therefore, Graphina serves as a corrective to Mariam while at the same time aligning the writer of the play with her appropriate speech. In this play, speech has the same imperatives as chastity—it is not that women *cannot* speak, but that they must speak to the right person. Ferguson reminds us that "a certain kind of speech signifies the same thing that 'silence' does in the discourse of wifely duty."<sup>55</sup> Likewise, the dictum to be chaste does not require abstaining from sex, but does require an appropriate use of that sexual act (i.e., within the parameters of her body being the property of her husband, cordoned off from use by other men). Through Graphina, then, the author adheres to the rules she creates for Mariam in her

play. It is when the play is made public that the paradox of Graphina's "silence" expressed through her speech serves as a site of slippage between a conservative reading, as I have outlined it in this chapter, and an anti-conservative manipulation of Mariam's transgressions as a figure for Elizabeth Cary's agency or autonomy. This potential slippage does not occur when Graphina's speech "legitimise[s] her act of writing by dissociating it conceptually from female 'public speech,'"<sup>56</sup> as Margaret Ferguson argues. Rather, Graphina is transgressive when—and only when—her "appropriate" speech is read by someone other than Pheroras. When the play circulates, the author challenges "the law and the necessary limits of its supposed absolute power" (Goldberg 189).

Graphina appears structurally in direct contrast to Mariam: while act 1 opens with Mariam's transgressive speech, act 2 begins with Graphina's exemplary speech, occurring immediately after the act 1 chorus has condemned Mariam's actions as similar to Salome's adultery. Graphina's speech is given in the appropriate setting: to her intended, and to no other person (until the play has a reader), and she speaks only when spoken to: Pheroras entreats her to "moue thy tongue" (586), in direct contrast to Mariam whose first lines are not solicited by anyone.<sup>57</sup> Graphina's serving, lowly class is explicitly referred to in the play as a sign of her humility. Salome remarks that Graphina is "One meane of birth" (1006). It is perhaps striking that someone of a non-aristocratic class is the perfect example in the play. But then again, Pheroras is both attempting to distinguish himself from the other characters in the play, while at the same time distinguishing Graphina from them also. She claims to be a "simple maide" (611), a "lowly hand-maide" (615) and points out that Pheroras is the only one that doesn't think her "base" (605). He asserts to her that "For though the Diadem on

*Mariams* head / Corrupt the vulgar iudgements, I will boast / *Graphinas* brow's as white, her cheekes as red" (583-5). He presents her as a conventional woman of leisure, devoid of racial markings.<sup>38</sup> He is also suspicious of nobility, calling "high birth a toy" (568) at the same time that it plays an important role in the passage. Graphina asserts that "Your hand hath lifted me from lowest state, / To highest eminencie wondrous grace" (602-3). Her chastity also figures her difference from the other female characters. Pheroras asserts her virginity by pointing out that she has been "kept ... from my bed" (572), and Graphina emphasizes the same point: "You haue preserued me pure at my request" (606). In fact, she either is called or calls herself a maid five times in the scene; in the final reference, Pheroras pointedly calls her a "faire virgin" (624).

Graphina's choice of topic reinforces her silence, since she talks only about her anxiety about speaking, with the implication that the only appropriate thing to speak about is a fear of speaking:<sup>39</sup> "If I be silent, tis no more but feare / That I should say too little when I speake" (594-5) and asserts that "In spight of doubt I will my silence breake" (597) and in the next line immediately wishes not to have to speak: "Yet might amazement tie my mouing tongue" (598). In fact, the first 23 of the 28 lines she speaks (all in one scene, one speech) are an argument for silence, as she admits in summary in the 24th line: "Then be my cause for silence iustly waide" (613). To complete the triadic stricture (her silence and chastity have already been repeatedly demonstrated), she says that her "fast obedience may your mind delight" (616). In fact, the point of her speech is to confirm her love for Pheroras, so that her silence is appropriately interpretable, and that Pheroras doesn't have to feel that "Silence is a signe of discontent" (587). A speaking woman, it appears from this passage, should speak for the right to be silent, and to her

(intended) husband only, as the third chorus would dictate. Therefore, if the “univocally conservative” argument of the play itself is that women should be silent, chaste, and obedient, then Graphina is the heroine of that reading. This construction also privileges the figure of the author as appropriately “silent.”

But Goldberg argues incisively that this type of privatization threatens to erase the complexity of Graphina’s representation: “we must take care not to erase female production or reduce it to a silence whose resistance can only be intuited. Graphina speaks, or more to the point, since this is what I take her speech to allegorize, she produces text, and at a site particularly marked as the woman’s text” (172). While I am persuaded by Goldberg’s desire not to allow Graphina to disappear into a realm of bizarrely present/absent silence, it seems to me that he has mistaken the site of her disappearance. Her resistance isn’t in the fact of her “production of text,” or that her name allegorizes that production through a paradoxical form of silence. As I have noted, speech can be activated in support of the patriarchal ideology that requires silence. Having a woman speak in favor of that silence is a way of naturalizing the ideological function of that silence. The site of her resistance is more material, and occurs when the text is made public, and when it is recognized that she stands as the author function.

To show this “material resistance,” I return to the beginning of this chapter, and the problematic of the publicly available text by a woman. Goldberg argues that “writing as a woman, Cary inevitably occupies differentially and conflictually a site that to be occupied at all cannot be entirely done from the position of suppressed, silent, and obedient woman” (187). Indeed, the printing of the play offers to nullify Graphina’s chastity, as it would make others privy to her speech. Often cited as a praise of Cary’s

writing ability, John Davies' 1612 poem "The Muse's SACRIFICE, Or Divine *Meditations*" includes a dedication to three literary women, one of them being "ELIZABETH, *Lady Cary*, (Wife of Sr. *Henry Cary*: )."<sup>60</sup> Davies' poem also makes explicit links between female sexual availability and printing (the public availability of text). In his poem, Davies praises the three dedicatees for their talents:

*Such neruy Limbes of Art, and Straines of Wit  
Times past n'er knew the weaker Sexe to haue;  
And Times to come, will hardly credit it,  
if thus thou giue thy Workes both Birth and Graue.*<sup>61</sup>

Davies here seems to solicit the women to save their works from the grave (i.e. to preserve them in print for posterity). After many stanzas detailing the lack of quality in contemporary printed works, Davies comes back to his dedicatees. The lines I reproduce below praise the women for *not* printing their works, claiming that decision shows good judgment:

*But you Three Graces, ...  
you presse the Presse with little you haue made*

*No: you well know the Presse so much is wrong'd,  
by abiect Rimers that great Hearts doe scorne  
To haue their Measures with such Nombres throng'd,  
as are so basely got, conceiu'd, and borne. (5)*

Set in opposition to the "*basely got, conceiu'd, and borne*" verses of other poems, the women's works (though unpublished) remain chaste and legitimate, since they refuse to "*presse the Presse*" with them ("pressing" of course indicates sexual activity, which leads only to bastard "children" in this case). The dedicatees therefore become the legitimating vessels for Davies' own verse, rather than their own: he writes that the women influence him to write because they "*most grace the Muse in most you doe*" (7). He ends



his poem by asking them to “*looke on These [his verses] and Me, with such a Glance, / That both may shine through your bright Countenance*” (7). The press is therefore legitimated as male through female exclusion and silence, even though women are necessary as patrons (mothers).

Cary’s play is printed the year following the printing of Davies’ poem. It has been suggested that “Davies’s tribute, and his comment that these three ladies have regrettably though understandably withheld most of their fine poetry from the debased press, may have prompted Cary to publish *Mariam* shortly thereafter.”<sup>62</sup> Indeed, in the context of Davies’ entire poem, the printing of *Mariam* in the following year appears to be done almost to spite Davies’ double-edged assertion that women writers, while of course they should grace the public with their verses, have shown wise judgment in not doing so. With its inclusion of Graphina as a character who, when the text is made publicly available, would transgress boundaries of “propriety” for women, the play signals the unreasonable limits of the prescription echoed in Davies’ poem. If the play had remained a “private” text, it would have mimicked the wife/husband relationship sanctioned by the play. However, in any other form, Graphina’s words threaten to displace the sanctity of that relationship’s gender hierarchy. By publishing Graphina, E.C. articulates the limits and takes the risks involved in printing as a woman.<sup>63</sup> Writing in itself isn’t transgressive, by the terms of the play, but printing—making words available for common consumption—is. I am not positing for the play a large site of resistance, or even an unequivocal one. However, a stress on the public nature of the play—both its reliance on the public use of women as symbolic capital, and the fact of its printing—underscores the way in which a text by a woman can be set against cultural-economic strictures.

## CHAPTER IV NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Wendy Wall, *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 280. Wall notes that class is also a constraint (281). Other critics who write about the injunction against female printing include Elaine Beilen, *Redeeming Eve: Women Writers of the English Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), xx-xxi; Elaine Hobby, *Virtue of Necessity: English Women's Writing, 1649-88* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988), 9-11; Tina Krontiris, *Oppositional Voices: Women as Writers and Translators of Literature in the English Renaissance* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 17-23; and Barbara Lewalski, *Writing Women in Jacobean England* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1993), 8.

<sup>2</sup> Such is the case with Mary Wroth's *Urania* (1621), the publication of which caused Lord Denny to virulently attack Wroth's sexual status, calling her a "monstrous hermaphrodite." See Wall, 337-8 as only one of many critical recountings of the Denny-Wroth clash.

<sup>3</sup> Barry Weller and Margaret Ferguson, eds. *The Tragedy of Mariam, The Fair Queen of Jewry, with The Lady Falkland: Her Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994). Weller and Ferguson trace the source of Graphina to the story in Josephus that Pheroras had fallen in love with a slave girl that Herod refused to allow him to marry. But she is nameless in the source material; E.C. provides her name (160, note to the act 2, scene one scene heading).

<sup>4</sup> Jonathan Goldberg, *Desiring Women Writing: English Renaissance Examples* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 164.

<sup>5</sup> Margaret W. Ferguson, "Running on with Almost Public Voice: The Case of 'E.C.'" in *Tradition and the Talents of Women*, edited by Florence Howe (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 37-67, especially 47-8. Citation from 48. Goldberg refers also to Dymphna Callaghan's treatment of Graphina (these are the only two articles before Goldberg that treat Graphina at any length). See Callaghan, "Re-reading Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedie of Mariam, Faire Queene of Jewry*," in *Women, "Race," and Writing in the Early Modern Period*, edited by Margo Hendricks and Patricia Parker (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 163-77. Her discussion of Graphina appears on 177.

<sup>6</sup> Margaret Ferguson uses this term to challenge Angeline Goreau's brief reading of *Mariam*'s act 3 chorus. Ferguson, "Running on with Almost Public Voice," 60 n4.

<sup>7</sup> Marta Straznicky, "'Profane Stoical Paradoxes': *The Tragedie of Mariam* and Sidnean Closet Drama," *English Literary Renaissance* 24 (1994), 104-34. Citation from 105. For biographical readings of *Mariam*, which almost all essays at least allude to, see: Elaine V. Beilen, *Redeeming Eve*, 157-76; Ferguson, "Running on with Almost Public Voice"; Sandra K. Fischer, "Elizabeth Cary and Tyranny, Domestic and Religious" in *Silent But for the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators, and Writers of Religious Works*, edited by Margaret Patterson Hannay (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1985), 225-37. Nancy Gutierrez, "Valuing *Mariam*: Genre Study and Feminist Analysis," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 10 (1991), 233-51; Tina Krontiris, *Oppositional Voices: Women as Writers and Translators of Literature in the English Renaissance* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 78-91; Karen L. Raber, "Gender and the Political Subject in *The Tragedy of Mariam*," *Studies in English Literature* 35 (1995), 321-343; Louise Schleiner, *Tudor and Stuart Women Writers* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), 175-181. Meredith Skura, "The Reproduction of Mothering in *Mariam, Queen of Jewry*: A Defense of Biographical Criticism," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 16 (1997), 27-56; Betty S. Travitsky, "The *femme covert* in Cary's *Mariam*" in *Ambiguous Realities: Women in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, edited by Carole Levin and Jeanie Watson (Detroit: Wayne State University Press 1987), 184-96; Kim Walker, *Women Writers of the English Renaissance* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996), 126-39.

<sup>8</sup> *The Lady Faulkland Her Life*, in Weller and Ferguson. The biography does not, perhaps for practical reasons (anonymity) mention *Mariam*, though it does name other pieces written by Cary. For an incisive critique of the use of the biography, see Stephanie Wright, "The Canonization of Elizabeth Cary," in *Voicing Women: Gender and Sexuality in Early Modern Writing*, edited by Kate Chedgzoy, Melanie Hansen and Suzanne Trill (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1997), 55-68, especially 58-61. Jesse G. Swan's "Cultural Purpose in the Editing of *The Lady Falkland: Her Life*" is a very smart read of the problems in editing the biography and in using the biography to read the play. Paper given at MLA, 1997. (forthcoming).

<sup>9</sup> For example, Gutierrez, 242, 24; Krontiris, 87; and Ferguson, "Running on with Almost Public Voice," 38, 58 all see the play as ambiguous, ambivalent or even contradictory.

<sup>10</sup> Walker, 139.

<sup>11</sup> Raber, 322, my emphasis.

<sup>12</sup> Ros Ballaster, "The First Female Dramatists," in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1500-1700*, edited by Helen Wilcox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 267-90. Citation from 273.

<sup>13</sup> I would also note the rewriting of the title of the play in Skura's article title: she refers to it as "*Mariam, Queen of Jewry*" so that the play is no longer a tragedy, and by removing "*Faire*" from the title, Skura removes issues of race as well.

<sup>14</sup> Callaghan, 165.

<sup>15</sup> Catherine Schuler, and Sharon Ammen, "Attending to Renaissance Women: A Script and Its Evolution." in *Attending to Women in Early Modern England*, edited by Betty S. Travitsky and Adele F. Seeff (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1994), 343. The script of the production is on 345-55.

<sup>16</sup> While the 1613 text does not have a stage direction for Salome to leave, Constabarus does say goodbye to her, and speaks the lines following in the third person. Both the Weller and Ferguson and Cerasano and Wynne-Davies versions add the stage direction for Salome to exit.

<sup>17</sup> Callaghan, 177.

<sup>18</sup> S. P. Cerasano, and Marion Wynne-Davies, eds. *Renaissance Drama by Women: Texts and Documents*. (New York and London: Routledge, 1996), 5.

<sup>19</sup> Nancy Cotton, *Women Playwrights in England, c. 1363-1750* (London: Associate University Presses, 1980), 35.

<sup>20</sup> Goldberg cautions critics from seeing Salome's divorce speech as "thrillingly proto-feminist." *Desiring Women Writers*, 179. Some critics do recognize that Salome is the villain: see Belsey, 174-5, Ferguson, "Running on with Almost Public Voice," 43; Krontiris, 85; Raber, 335-8; Schleiner, 179; and Travitsky, 190-2. Schleiner points out that Salome's divorce speech should not be read as a "protofeminist brief for women's right to leave bad marriages" (179).

<sup>21</sup> See Margaret Ferguson's reconsideration of the question of autonomy in "Moderation and its Discontents: Recent Work on Renaissance Women," *Feminist Studies* 20 (1994), 349-66. She asks, for example, "what it means to ascribe 'autonomy' to women whose recorded words stress a notion of desirable female 'selfhood' that differs in important ways from what modern liberal feminists usually mean by autonomy" (354).

<sup>22</sup> Goldberg simply eschews any question of guilt or blame, which is commendable, but leads him to assert that Mariam chooses to die (178)—a problematic disavowal of dominance and power structures. I'm interested in a middle ground that neither blames the text for its participation in a dominant discourse of women as sexual property, nor removes the text from that sphere of influence.

<sup>23</sup> Angeline Goreau, *The Whole Duty of a Woman: Female Writers in Seventeenth-Century England* (New York: Dial Press, 1984), 9.

<sup>24</sup> Keith Thomas, "The Double Standard," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 20 (1959), 195-216. Thomas is clear that the double standard is largely an aristocratic class phenomenon. 200-1, 204, 206, 211-2. Thomas writes: "it was only the chastity of women with property which continued to be legally protected, because the loss in the case of landless women was nobody's but their own" (212).

<sup>25</sup> The insistence on inheritance, however, introduces a problem with the "conservative" model. Amy Erickson and other social historians have nullified patrilinearity as the only model of inheritance. Thus, if a form of primogeniture is not a defining characteristic of the inheritance system, then the fear of bastard children is somewhat alleviated. Erickson points out, for example, that daughters sometimes inherited portions of their father's estates (but as a means of ensuring good marriages). She also notes that women wrote wills. However, I am not arguing that this text is an accurate reflection of the society that produced it. Amy Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 1993); Jack Goody, Joan Thirsk, E.P. Thompson, *Family and Inheritance: Rural Society in Western Europe, 1200-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Keith Wrightson, *English Society, 1580-1680* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1982); and Ralph Houlbrooke, *The English Family, 1450-1700* (London: Longmans, 1984).

<sup>26</sup> Patricia Parker, "Othello and Hamlet: Dilation, Spying, and the 'Secret Place' of Woman," *Representations* 44 (1993), 60-95. Citation from 64.

<sup>27</sup> Karen Newman, "City Talk: Women and Commodification," in *Staging the Renaissance: Reinterpretations of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama*, edited by David Scott Kastan and Peter Stallybrass (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 181-95. Citation from 184. Peter Stallybrass, "Patriarchal Territories: The Body Enclosed," in *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Margaret W. Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy J. Vickers (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 123-42, especially 127.

<sup>28</sup> Ferguson, "Running on with Almost Public Voice," 51-2.

<sup>29</sup> Catherine Gallagher, "Who Was That Masked Woman?: The Prostitute and the Playwright in the Comedies of Aphra Behn," in *Rereading Aphra Behn: History, Theory, and Criticism*, edited by Heidi Hutner (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1993), 65-85. Citation from 70.

<sup>30</sup> See Weller and Ferguson's section on the choruses, 35-38.

<sup>31</sup> Ferguson, "Running on with Almost Public Voice," 52.

<sup>32</sup> See Belsey, 173-4; and Ferguson, "Running on with Almost Public Voice" 53-4. Ferguson writes: "Since Mariam is in danger because she speaks to her husband—and against his sexual will and property rights—perhaps Cary's point, if not the chorus's, is that if a wife has such thoughts she 'would be wiser to keep them to herself, precisely because in marriage they are no longer her own' (53, quoting Belsey). But Mariam isn't in danger by speaking to her husband, but to anyone beyond her husband. Ferguson reads the "second ear," then, as the husband's.

<sup>33</sup> I note here, even though it is a biographical detail, that this is also the motto that Cary purportedly gives her oldest daughter on her wedding ring: "Be and seem." While many critics remark on the ring, very few implicate their interpretation in the play. Krontiris, has a rather odd interpretation of the motto: she glosses it as "be true to yourself," (81) which seems to be something like exercise a personal ethic, which certainly, it seems to me, wouldn't be the point of the ring, the role of the wife-as-property, or the chorus of act 3.

<sup>34</sup> This is Ferguson's call in "Running on with Almost Public Voice," 52.

<sup>35</sup> See Thomas, 199-202.

<sup>36</sup> Antipater's name traditionally means "instead of the father," and implies not usurpation, but legitimacy (it's closer to "after the father" than "against the father")

<sup>37</sup> This line is sometimes emended "Let fishes graze, beastes swim, and birds descend". See Weller and Ferguson, 159, n425; earlier suggested by Dunston and Greg, x, n439. However, it makes some sense as is in the 1613 text, if we understand "descend" to be equated with swimming, or descending from the earth or sky. Either way, the meaning of the line is clear: everything has its properly ordered and natural place that threatens to be perverted by Salome's unnatural act.

<sup>38</sup> Travitsky points this out, 191, as does Beilen, 168.

<sup>39</sup> See Genesis 1-3, especially Genesis 3:16.

<sup>40</sup> A line in chorus 5 suggests that Constabarus is "both diuorst and slaine" (2216), but it seems that line might be read in its more metaphorical meaning that he is divorced—separated—from Salome. It does not seem possible that he could be legally divorced in a day, not even by his own instigation.

<sup>41</sup> For the use of women as a token ensuring a homosocial bond between men, see Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985). See also Goldberg's definitions of male-male bonds, especially 169-73.

<sup>42</sup> For an insightful and wide-reaching essay on Jewish divorce law and its resonance in Protestant law, see M. Lindsay Kaplan, "Subjection and Subjectivity: Jewish Law and Female Autonomy," in *Feminist Readings of Early Modern Culture: Emerging Subjects*, edited by Valerie Traub, M. Lindsay Kaplan, and Dymphna Callaghan (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 229-52.

Weller and Ferguson give a convincing argument for understanding *Mariam* through the contemporary Catholic debates on divorce (understanding, of course, that the time of the play predates christianity). Their impetus for doing so is Elizabeth Cary's own Catholicism. Even though Cerasano and Wynne-Davies dismiss Weller and Ferguson's argument, it is clear from other sources that they are a bit hasty in their judgement: "Ferguson and Weller suggest that the importance of divorce to the play occurs because of Cary's interest in Henry VIII's divorce from Catherine of Aragon in order to marry Anne Boleyn. Although they produce persuasive arguments for this, there was nearly a century between the historical event and the writing of the play, and the other works they cite as being influenced by the event were all published in the 1540's" (187 n14). Yet there are still other texts that are reprinted during the 1570's, probably as a result of Elizabeth's February 25, 1570 official excommunication by the Pope, which was long-awaited by Catholics. Catherine Belsey notes that the divorce debate reaches a fever pitch in the 1590s (147, 185), not to mention the several Catholic plots to depose Elizabeth and put a Catholic ruler on the throne in her place (Mary, Queen of Scots most notably). The historical use of the Herod, Salome, and John the Baptist story to analogize Henry VIII's is outlined by Weller and Ferguson, which makes this very story and its problematic nature as it relates to legitimate rule an efficient analogy of Henry's divorce(s). See Weller and Ferguson, 30-35. Also central to establishing the saliency of Henry VIII's divorce is Shakespeare's *The Famous History of the Life of the King Henry VIII*, which appears in 1613, the same year as Cary's text. Since Henry VIII's split with the Catholic Church, divorce had been a proving ground for theological debate in the unsettled religious climate, since the Catholic church did not allow divorce. Technically, divorces were allowed by Protestants, but in practice, the granting of divorces was an arduous process that was only justified in a very few number of cases.

The hypothesis of this analogy's relationship to *Mariam* is as follows. In 1533 Henry divorces Catherine of Aragon and marries Ann Boleyn, the mother of future queen Elizabeth. Since the Catholics did not consider the divorce from Catherine to be legitimate, they "continued to regard [Elizabeth], long after her accession, as the 'bastard' offspring of an incestuous union between Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn" (Weller and Ferguson 30). Since *Mariam* in Cary's play is the second wife of Herod, it is tempting to read her as Anne Boleyn. Ferguson, "Running on with Almost Public Voice" 55-56 points out that Josephus doesn't mention the means by which *Mariam* is put to death so that it would seem that Cary was echoing the deaths of John the Baptist (appropriate because of the Salome connection in the play) and Anne Boleyn. It would also mean that she is, as the play suggests, an adulteress, and it would be a very subtle (posthumous, even) way of questioning the legitimacy of Elizabeth's reign. While it is tempting to read *Mariam* through Cary's Catholic sentiments, the particular way that this plays out in the text is difficult to determine.

<sup>43</sup> As seems to be clear from the next paragraph cited, the relationship of *Mariam* to Hircanus should be "granddaughter" rather than daughter. This is noted in Dunston and Greg, Weller and Ferguson, and Cerasano and Wynne-Davies.

<sup>44</sup> See Genesis 25:29-34.

<sup>45</sup> Weller and Ferguson point out that indeed, Doris is "an accurate prophet of her enemies' misfortunes. A series of slanders, instigated by Antipater ... enraged Herod against Alexander and Aristobulus, his sons by *Mariam*" (172 n624).

<sup>46</sup> Goldberg, 178; Maureen Quilligan, "Staging Gender: William Shakespeare and Elizabeth Cary." in Turner, James Grantham, ed. *Sexuality and Gender in Early Modern Europe: Institutions, Texts, Images*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 208-32. Her treatment of Cary is primarily on 224-30. Quilligan reads Mariam's line "Tell thou my Lord thou saw'st me loose my breath" (2015) as evidence of Mariam's agency in willfully losing her breath from her body, as opposed to losing her breath, which would imply her passivity (227). <sup>47</sup> "I will not to his loue be reconcilde, / With solemne vowes I haue forsworne his Bed" (1135-6). This vow indeed transgresses Herod's right to her body. But since she doesn't have opportunity to enact her vow, and Herod doesn't know she has taken this vow, it seems that it would be his reason for sentencing her to death.

<sup>48</sup> Of course, this is an implicit critique of Salome also, since she wavers between lovers, and certainly, like Mariam, wishes variety. One meaning of "variety" listed in the OED is a change in fortune (def. 1.a), which seems to be how it is used in that passage, and in that case, the yoking of Salome and Mariam makes sense, because they each wish that their relationship with their husbands could be better—but the chorus admonishes them to be happy with what they have.

<sup>49</sup> Raber, 322. She cites Ferguson and Belsey for support.

<sup>50</sup> See Kim F Hall, "Beauty and the Beast of Whiteness: Teaching Race and Gender." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 47 (1996), 461-475. In this essay, Hall notes the Petrarchan gesture that the beauty and purity of the beloved are even more redolent after she dies (471). Gutierrez writes eloquently about the several sonnets that appear hidden in various speeches of Mariam's. As she discusses the sonnet tradition's political conventions, she claims that Mariam "destroy[s] her Petrarchan self" because she takes control of her self definition, and it is specifically not conventionally Petrarchan, and that therefore, "it is the female character, Mariam, not the male character, Herod, who has the power of creation: she fashions herself as she wants to be" (241). Yet, Herod has Mariam killed, which would seem to be Herod's control of her "power of creation" (he stops it), and his final speech re-constructs her as the typical sonnet mistress—she is fair, pure, chaste, etc. See Gutierrez, 238-41 for her discussion of the sonnets in *Mariam*.

<sup>51</sup> Parker links this narrative closure with the closure of the open orifice (72).

<sup>52</sup> Callaghan makes the point that an early modern audience probably would have recognized Mariam's status as a second wife as a complication (177).

<sup>53</sup> Beilen has noted that "literary virtue often appears less interesting and lively than vice" (169).

<sup>54</sup> Callaghan writes that Graphina's "lower-class femininity becomes a fantasized location" (177).

<sup>55</sup> "Running on with Almost Public Voice," 47. Belsey notes the same lack of transgression, 168-9.

<sup>56</sup> Margaret W. Ferguson, "Renaissance Concepts of the 'woman writer,'" in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1500-1700*, edited by Helen Wilcox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 143-68. Citation from 155.

<sup>57</sup> Ferguson, "Renaissance concepts of the 'woman writer,'" writes that the play "explicitly raises the possibility that 'silence' may be 'a sign of discontent,' an ambiguous or dissimulated sign that hides from the audience the true thoughts of the female writer or the female speaker. By this logic, writing that appears to be obedient, like Graphina's speech, may in fact harbour subversive designs" (155).

<sup>58</sup> See Callaghan's discussion of racial markings in the play, especially 170-7. See also Goldberg's comments on Callaghan's reading, 183-7.

<sup>59</sup> Later, in act 3, when Pheroras tells Salome that he has fallen in love with Graphina because of her wit and because "mirth on her tongue doth sit" (1011) it is important to note that Graphina isn't in that scene, which means that her "wit" is only shared with Pheroras, as mandated by chorus 3. Also, the OED lists only one entry under "wit" that refers directly to speaking. The others refer to consciousness or knowledge.

<sup>60</sup> The other two are "LVCY, Countesse of Bedford " and "MARY, Countesse-Dowager of Pembroke." Cary is the only one whose identity is underscored by a naming of her husband.

<sup>61</sup> John Davies of Hereford, "The Muse's SACRIFICE, Or Divine *Meditations* " (London, 1612), 5.

<sup>62</sup> Lewalski, 183. See also Cotton, 37. Wall reads Davies' sexualization and subsequent privatization of the women as "unwitting," she nevertheless reminds that he also draws on the fact that "publication was rhetorically scripted as a lower-class activity" (281); Margaret Ferguson in "Running on with Almost Public Voice" points out the duplicity of Davies' poem (44-5).

<sup>63</sup> I mean this term to counter Goldberg's use of "writing as a woman" (166).



## CHAPTER V

WOMEN/MONEY: OWNERSHIP OF THE WHORING BODY  
(THE SECOND PART OF THE ROVER, THE FEIGN'D CURTIZANS)I. Women/Money

The first part of my chapter title comes from an essay by Clare A. Lees on *Piers Plowman*. Despite the specificity of her argument for that particular text, Lees' vocabulary for expressing the commodified and gendered position of the character Mede in the poem proves invaluable to my argument. She writes that "the meaning of Mede is inescapably associated with how men exchange her, with masculine desires for woman and wealth,"<sup>1</sup> so that "the ambivalence of her figure expresses Langland's ambivalence toward the uses and abuses of reward" (116). This ambivalence is expressed through sublimation: "the newly pressing issue of the social circulation of money [is displaced] onto the issue of the more traditional institutions of the patrilinear family and patriarchal marriage" (117). A purposeful discursive link between women and money has as its goal a control of women (I will suspend until the end of the chapter whether or not this goal is successfully reached in the plays I consider). Therefore, Lees suggests that money functions efficiently in the same place as woman, since the use of both reflects anxieties of the need for proper patriarchal order. She records the relationship between women and money as "women/money" (116) in order to highlight their mutual substitutability.

Although the plays I consider in this chapter are later than *Piers*

*Plowman*, and the “social circulation of money” is in the seventeenth century no longer a “newly pressing issue,” the fetishized proximity of women to money still has “a powerful hold on the critical imagination” (116). The figure of the whore in restoration comedy lays bare but also complicates the substitutive qualities of money and women. The economic identity of the whore is applicable to women who are not whores but who nevertheless threaten to transgress proscriptions within an economic system (i.e., when they threaten to become *agents* of exchange, not objects of it). Each of my four sections in this chapter explores a different version of women/money in plays on the public stage after the restoration. I use the idea of money in its fetishized form to establish a different context for women’s sexual use as symbolic capital than I have so far in this study: the spectatorial display of the woman in a performance economy. Katharine Quinsey notes one of the consequences of women’s public presence on the stage: “theatrical spectatorship becomes a form of voyeurism reflecting its own gender-based economies.”<sup>2</sup> As I will show, each version of women/money entails an economic class position, even when women and money are mutually exclusive; women are represented as symbolic capital, no matter their eventual position within the closure of the play.

For example, the confluence of women and money is unambiguous in Mrs. F. Boothby’s *Marcellia, or, the Treacherous Friend* (produced 1669, printed 1670).<sup>3</sup> Every scene with the fop Lucidore expresses the extent to which he is concerned with money: how much money he has, how much he can afford to lose in gambling, how money much he could acquire through marriage, and how he could get even more without marriage. In his very first scene, he claims to have lost all his money to the King’s favorite, Melynet. But Peregrine suggests that “his Fortune’s like to have no bottom”

(B4v). The play, by establishing Lucidore as a quintessential profiteer, explores the means by which inexhaustible fortunes are made. And, as is characteristic of always-wealthy fops, Lucidore is also in the business of flirting (and more) with every woman in the play. His love of garnering money proves to be the same as his love of women; indeed, he becomes a bawd to his mistress as he sells the sight of her to his male companions.

The Petrarchan construction of the male lover as slave to his beloved is deployed in *Marcellia* as an expression of gender relations. In the course of the play, Lucidore turns this relationship into an inescapably economic one that serves as a trope of class relationships as well. He teases his friends with descriptions of his mistress, claiming that if they could only see her, they would be her slaves. His friends' obsession with seeing Lucidore's mistress begins because they cannot believe that Lucidore would be in love with only one woman because of his appetite for both money and women. When Almeric asks him "When wilt thou grow tame, *Lucidore*?" (C3r), Lucidore answers: "When Usurers commonly grow mad, when I have lost all my money, and that I am forc'd to think of Marriage for the convenient support of some rich widows Jointure" (C3r). His wildness is supported his financial position--since he has money, he has no need for a wife. But when his friends criticize his cynical construction of love as a mercenary venture, Lucidore claims, "Why, I am in Love, infinitely in Love, up to the head and ears in Love" (C3v). Peregrine, Valasco, and Almeric try to guess the qualities of this woman who threatens to tame Lucidore:

*Alm.* Sure thy Mistress is very kind then, thou art so merry.

*Luc.* She is so, she denies me nothing that I ask her.

*Alm.* She is very coming too it seems. Pr'ythee tell me, is she thy particular Mistress, or is she one that may be generally so to all thy Friends?

*Luc.* No Sir, I will assure you I am not so free to keep a

communicative Mistress.

*Val.* Why, cast thou seriously love any thing?

*Luc.* Yes, when the object's worthy; and I presume her infinitely so, her charms beget so many slaves. (C3v)

Almeric's lines reveal that he suspects she is a whore, but Lucidore denies that she would be "communicative," a statement that will have levels of puns when the friends finally meet her. In this way, she is figured as a woman of quality since she is "particular" and not "communicative." Lucidore speaks about his mistress in economic terms: she's worthy, and her worth is guarded because she is not a "communicative Mistress." Not only does she not speak, but she is also not "common"--she is not one that can be shared among men (whores are called "common women"). And yet, her worth is also dependent on the number of men she can seduce into submission because "her charms beget so many slaves."<sup>4</sup> In fact, Lucidore's three friends are so taken by his description of her that they insist they must see her specifically to test their powers against becoming a slave to a woman:

*Per.* I fain would see her: I dare be confident she will make none of me.

*Val.* Nor of me.

*Alm.* And I dare warrant you for my particular. (C3v)

Ever entrepreneurial, Lucidore promises that they can test their strength against these charms at a cost: "You are all fair promisers, Gentlemen; if you will lay a hundred Pistols a piece, or so, you shall see her: Nay more, I'll take your own word whether you love or not; you shall be the accusers of your own hearts, and then I'll be the Executioner of your Purses" (C3v). Lucidore has made his friends' (discursive) class status and its threatened loss into a financial risk, signalled by Lucidore's promise to "execute" their purses. That risk is inextricably bound up with their

affirmation of the class status of a woman as master over them.

In a soliloquy, Lucidore explains his financial strategy to the audience. He claims he will “whet up [his friends’] desires of seeing my Mistress, with a day or two’s expectation longer, the sight will come too cheap else, and lessen their obligations, if I afford it at their first request” (E4r). He hopes that anticipation will build up their desire, an economic move that builds interest (curiosity as well as profit) through decreasing availability. His friends balk at his price, since their money could buy more than just the sight of a woman: “you hold the sight too costly; you forget that we can see the Creation of the World for 18 pence, where there are twenty fine sights besides the Woman. A hundred Pistols to see a Woman!” (C3v). Because they struggle to avoid the expenditure Lucidore requires, Lucidore claims an early victory over them: “Well, I percieve you have examin’d your Conscience, and find you are frail and dare not venture your Money, for all your boasting.” Lucidore’s implicit challenge places them in a double bind in terms of their class status. On the one hand, in order to maintain their status as “masters,” they must venture the money to see her, and thus risk becoming a “slave.” But on the other hand, if they do invest the money, then their class status has been confirmed through their expenditure—as long as they do not in fact become her slaves. Lucidore admits his financial venture will enhance class status: “I never lov’d to expose my friends to danger, unless some profit may accrew by it to them or me; and all from this will be the certain knowledg, that you know not yourselves, and that’s an Article of Faith I have already put into my Creed” (C4r). Lucidore is sure they will be her slaves, and turns “self knowledge” (i.e., discipline indicating class status as the assurance that one is “master” of oneself and not slave to a woman) into symbolic capital, an accumulation of profit through knowledge. The real profit comes for

Lucidore, though, as he is sure they will be slaves, and he will win the bet and the right to “execute” their purses.

Lucidore’s ploy to “accrew” profit works, since Valasco admits that “we could hold out not longer, you have rais’d our hopes to such a height of expectation,” and Almeric claims that “the fancy of her beauty does so hant our imaginations, we cannot sleep nor eat quietly for conceiting of her” (E4r). Though they do not pay to see her, Lucidore’s mistress is finally revealed to them with great pomp. As the men gather in Lucidore’s rooms, he calls for her to be brought to him. The stage directions call for a spectacular presentation: *“The Scene opens, and there lies heaps of money up and down; and there stands five persons about the table with bags in their hands, dress’d in Antick habit: (as others at the door) They come out and dance, and keep time with their Bags and Pockets ”* (G3r). As this bewildering scene is explained by Lucidore, it is obvious that Lucidore’s mistress is money: “What think you, Gentlemen, of her? There she is; and her Attendants: Her servants shall give you a Dance ... You see this is the Mistris of my heart and pleasure” (G3r). Even though they had assured him they would not, the friends all agree that they are indeed her slaves. Lucidore pushes them: “do you not all love her? Confess, confess.” Peregrine answers: “The truth of it is, we should all lye horribly if we did deny that; we all adore her, and are her most humble and faithful servants; for without her, there is no satisfaction in this World” (G3r). Lucidore ends the scene echoing Peregrine’s yoking of “satisfaction” with women/money in a couplet praising earthly materialism:

*I hate such Fools, as cannot be content  
With pleasures which that World to this hath lent.* (G3v)

Lucidore’s money-as-mistress, then, functions efficiently in the place of woman (and vice-versa), to the extent that money and woman can be

described in the exact same terms. The three friends (as well as the audience) are surprised that “she” is not in fact a woman. This surprise testifies to the use and exchange value of women, but also to the gendering of profit and exchange. Discursively, women and money operate as the same thing: the language that constitutes their respective representations is the same in each case.

When it is revealed that Lucidore’s mistress is actually money, then we can see in retrospect that, Volpone-like, he has tried to garner wealth by banking on what he already has. He states in fact that his use of her indicates competing modes of measuring class status: “I purchase her by the sale of my Lands” (G3r). He exchanges property for money, and makes that money specularly available for visual consumption. But the real value of “her” is in her accumulation. He lures his friends into a sort of pyramid scheme—in order to show them his mistress (money), they have to give him money so that he has something to show them. He collects her even as he represents her to his friends as something already collected and ready for circulation. While it might be possible that this conclusion would be tempered by the fact that the men claim that they are in fact slaves to her, unable to imagine pleasure without her, it must be noted that they are slaves to that which guarantees their class status as “masters.” They are never *truly* in danger of being slaves.

The friends stand as a figure for the audience, because we have paid to see Lucidore’s mistress without knowing that we were investing in women/money. We have not seen his mistress either, and we know no more than the friends do. Our own anticipation is built up by this assertion of her value and worth, a reaction complicit with a construction of female beauty as economically valuable.<sup>5</sup> The sight of her depends on our payment,

our monetary support of the play itself. The audience is therefore immediately implicated in a (male) specular construction of women/money. The scene also shows that Lucidore has become a bawd to his own desire for money: he has bought her and sells her to his own profit. Therefore, as in the case of the plays I consider in this chapter, each of which depends on a version of the woman/money construct; when a woman is linked with money, she is easily representable as a whore.

There is one further level to the analogy of the women/money construct in this play specifically for the Restoration stage: women play the roles of female characters, making their living by making themselves specularly available in the same way that money is gendered and made available as a woman in this play. This specular legibility adds to the complexity of the audience's involvement: the saliency of the women/money construct is literally enacted upon the stage, revealed to the audience and to the three friends in an embodied moment of the meeting of money and woman, all revealed as a joke, a trick that Lucidore plays on his friends. But this visual trope makes the gaze always male, and the object of the gaze always feminized. In the case of this play, women/money is constructed and controlled through its sexual/specular availability. The gaze is therefore the reason that the friends do not have to pay to see her: looking at her accomplishes an expenditure with a similar ideological function. The availability of money guarantees the availability of women (and vice-versa, as women are always symbolic capital convertible into real capital). The availability of both reified as the same thing guarantees the (inferior) economic place of the woman within a male economy.

This specular legibility can be extended to the position of the writing woman as well as the actress, both of whom are at this time conventionally



expressed as whores because of their profession (indeed, because they *had* a profession). Some critics suggest that the actress- or female-writer-as-whore was an enabling construct because it allowed women to act on the stage, and it provided an identity for the writer—one that is “subversive” because it allows a place from which a woman can express and practice agency. Catherine Gallagher even suggests that Aphra Behn’s self-authored connection to prostitution, for example, is a

gender-specific version of possessive individualism, one constructed in opposition to the very real alternative of staying whole by renouncing self-possession, an alternative that had no legal reality for men in the seventeenth century .... By flaunting her self-sale, Aphra Behn embraced the title of whore .... she even uses this persona to make herself seem the prototypical writer.<sup>6</sup>

Therefore, the position of the writer-as-whore is potentially alleviated by the money given her by patrons: if Behn, for example, can make money from her work for the stage, then she doesn’t literally have to be a whore. However, as Janet Todd points out, “she had less control over how others commented on her sex,” which led to a “tendency to sully her reputation.”<sup>7</sup>

However, the professional woman/whore could be configured in very different terms. Elizabeth Howe is particularly expressive about why the actress/whore conflation might be difficult to celebrate. Her reservation is that it supports an economy that is at the same time driven by profit and gendered male. While Howe outlines the ways that certain actresses were responsible for the types of roles they played by encouraging writers to create roles for them that highlight their best acting abilities, Howe also states that the fact that plays were “able to cast a woman [in the women’s roles] ... did not result in greater insight into her feelings, but rendered her more of an object” (49). Her critique centers on the condition of acting on the stage, which makes

the actresses sexually available in the same way as whores: "the advent of actresses certainly encouraged a great deal of stage violence which was clearly intended to provide a sexual thrill for spectators" (43). A desire for the sexual/specular availability of the woman even affected trends in which dramas were performed: "the decline in popularity of Shakespearean comedy and the cynical focus on adultery, inconstancy and conflict in Restoration comedy can partly be attributed to the provocative use of the actress and society's view of her as whorish, fickle and sexually available" (62-3). As evidence, Howe discusses gratuitous rapes that are added to Restoration versions of earlier plays (46-9), the rape functioning, as she suggests above, as a way of specularizing the female body: "The presence of women's bodies on the stage encouraged lurid, eroticised presentations of female suffering, and was designed to tantalise, rather than to attack violent masculine behaviour" (176). Howe's work concludes that "the Restoration actress was exploited sexually on and off the stage, promoting gratuitous titillation in the drama and prostitution behind the scenes" (171). The violence against women has to do with the unconventionality of their representation which, in this time and place, is always homologous to a conventional one:

In general, the arrival of actresses seems to have achieved very little modification of conventional stereotypes, and in many ways their exploitation intensified them .... The tendency of Restoration tragedy to characterise women as frail and incapable is perhaps a result of the increasingly popular image of women as a soft, domestic opposite to the ruling male sex. It might also be seen as a reaction against the radical, potentially alarming development of actually allowing women on to the stage. If consistently portrayed as weaker than men in the public spheres which are the dominion of tragedy, the female player posed no threat to male-dominated society. (176)

Women onstage are therefore the sexual/specular objects of the audience, their presence on the stage reinforcing rather than rewriting the

ideological economy of gender through an homology of function. Julie Nash points out that this construction is inescapably gendered. She writes that "there existed no association between professional men and illicit sexuality as there was with women; thus a female spectator would be less likely to objectify the actor because his position is less inherently linked to commodified sexuality than the actress's."<sup>8</sup> Dominance over the representation of women therefore commodifies them in their roles as part of the economy: no matter how they are configured, they are always in a certain economic relationship to men.

If seventeenth-century women are therefore discursively constituted as economically suspect because of their sexual availability, then it is understandable that the Restoration theater is configured as a place of illicit sexuality. It is therefore ensured that women participating in theatrical specularities are representable as whores. Joseph Lenz has written about the gendered relationship between the whorehouse and the theater, drawing theoretical conclusions from the fact that men often actually found whores at the theater. This actual relationship, Lenz suggests, is heightened by and appropriate for theater because of reasons in addition to convenient assignments: "both the actor and the prostitute perform 'with a lewde intent of committing whoredome,' of beguiling the client with a simulated (but nonetheless stimulating) experience."<sup>9</sup> Lenz shows that the construction of the gaze, the eye in particular, made prostitution a useful "metaphor" for the restoration theater:

The theater is seen through prostitution seeking eyes because the eyes, quite naturally and reflexively, seek prostitution. That is, they are attracted by, submit to, and enjoy visual stimulation. And, as mere bodily organs, the eyes, like the sexual organs, cannot distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate pleasure. Thus, the theater is caught in a double bind. For the theater to be theater it must rely upon

visual display, and the more spectacular its display, the more it provokes the (false) erotics of sensory stimulation and the more it resembles a whorehouse, where the duplicity of pretense is marketed for profit. (841)

He also points out that this “double bind” has to do with specific representations of the seventeenth-century female body:

Drawings of the eye made by Roger Bacon, in the thirteenth century, and by Vesalius, the Belgian anatomist in the sixteenth, resemble drawings of the female sexual organs: images enter through the pupil and are channeled through the optic nerve into the brain, where, in Richard II's words, they ‘people this little world.’ The eyes are a channel, a vagina, if you will, the means through which the mind is impregnated with ‘all evilnesse and mischief.’ This impregnation is itself a transgression, an unnatural submission of the masculine will to effeminate gesture and costly apparel, a submission that results, not in genuine impregnation, the legitimate object of natural intercourse, but in solipsistic pleasure. (841)

Specular/sexual availability creates the desire to see as consonant with a desire for illicit sexual pleasure. Legitimate sexual pleasure, therefore, is not to be found at the theater. The complexity of what Lenz outlines—payment for the opportunity for the eye to take in the female actress as whore in turn financially supports the institution that profits from the continued circulation of that representation—testifies to the saliency of the women/money construct, because the availability of one alludes to the use of the other. This commodified use of women is underwritten by the benefit of making those gender roles static in the mode of economic production and circulation.

## II. Whore/Captial

If seventeenth-century women are compelled to save their virginity and chastity because of property requirements naturalized as “virtue,” then sexual anxieties regarding chastity are anxieties of class, as I argued in chapter four. And if women *spend* their virginity and chastity because of poverty, then that expenditure also becomes a potential class sign. Indeed, women who are not chaste are often portrayed as lower class, as are the bawds and whores in *Bartholomew Fair* or *Measure for Measure*. And lower class women, as I delineated with Cavendish’s *The Lady Contemplation* in chapter three, are often figured as sexually available—as whores. Chastity therefore entails appropriate (re)production, in terms of the correct lineage of children, inheritance of lands, wealth, property. The idea of chastity also reinforces a certain type of ideological reproduction that has primogeniture as only one symptom of a (economic) gender hierarchy. But sexual availability creates a site of consumption—the fear that the woman herself is used--consumed—in a way that threatens to disrupt gender hierarchies and patriarchal order. Sexual incontinence is figured as a disruptive force, evidenced by the fact that women were held legally responsible when they were adulterous or if they engaged in prostitution. Men, on the other hand, were rarely punished for their participation in these crimes.<sup>10</sup> Money as an overt signifier of property congeals around issues of prostitution; the economics of the representation of the whore confused with “the woman of quality” reveals the extent to which money is wrapped up in and contributes to an overdetermination of seventeenth-century sexuality and class identity.

Scholarship on prostitution is often concerned with the moral reception of the prostitute.<sup>11</sup> Ruth Mazo Karras, a medieval historian,

outlines the two ways that scholarship on prostitution has treated its subject. On the one hand prostitutes are figured as victims of a particular economic climate characterized by patriarchal privilege. Karras writes

stressing the patriarchal nature of medieval (or any other) society tends to cast women as helpless victims. If we look at the sources left to us, which come from the church and the legal system, we do indeed see a nearly unremitting misogyny and oppression, but this may not reflect the way women actually lived their lives and viewed themselves. (7)

On the other hand, prostitutes have been featured as women who *chose* their profession and were therefore enabled by the money they earned to support themselves (8). But Karras writes that “placing too much emphasis on women as agents can lead to the obliteration of the oppressive context in which they exercised agency” (8). Karras therefore concludes that “prostitution cannot be considered in strictly economic terms” (9). I argue that since the idea of the whore depends on notions of male property ownership, it would appear that in fact the whore can be considered in economic terms—her representation, her use is always implicated in a male economy.

Studies on prostitution as a profession find that seventeenth-century women (as well as women in earlier and later cultures) are compelled by economic circumstance into prostitution. Poverty, a lack of prospects, loss of maidenhead that causes her family to disown her—these things propelled women into prostitution, not the desire for libertinism.<sup>12</sup> If a woman had been “seduced, or had lost a father or a husband, the poverty which became her lot also became the primary cause for her sin; embarrassed circumstance rather than lust was the motivating factor. Poverty was an important aspect which led to the increased rise in prostitution in the seventeenth century,”

forcing these women to spend “their one marketable commodity.”<sup>13</sup> Joy Wiltenburg, considering street literature in England, has pointed out that “the whore is often pictured as freed from all bonds of labor and subjection, a living denial of the norms of moral and social behavior; and attainment of this freedom is often seen as her motive for entering the trade” (167). And this freedom is also threatening: “by retaining emotional and economic autonomy, she shatters the pleasant illusion that sexual relations with her will conform, for all their irregularity, to the norm of female subordination and faithfulness to the man who has ‘had’ her” (Wiltenburg 173). Therefore, initiation into prostitution and the maintenance of the prostitute afterwards becomes a specific condition of class.

Anne M. Haselkorn’s 1983 literary study posits a spectrum of seventeenth-century responses to the prostitute: the cavalier attitude (prostitutes don’t need to be reformed, but are subject to disdain and punishment), puritan (prostitutes should be reformed), and what she terms the liberal attitude (that the prostitute’s reformation includes marriage in some way) (20-23). Others, such as Jean E. Howard, have considered the prostitute for the threat that she poses to the gender hierarchy. Howard writes that “women who crossdressed were ... accused of ... being whores .... [S]uch women signal not only the breakdown of the hierarchical gender system, but of the class system as well.”<sup>14</sup> The medical threat they pose is also analyzed; Valerie Traub argues that the prostitute cannot be considered without understanding the threat she posed in the spread of venereal disease. Traub even calls the threat of disease “the most material and paranoid manifestation of the circulation of sexuality.”<sup>15</sup> Jonathan Dollimore writes of the way the idea of the prostitute serves ideology in a “process of displacement, disavowal and splitting.”<sup>16</sup> Prostitutes therefore are “imagined

to be subverting the patriarchal order even as they are the victims of its displacements" (40).

The patriarchal order is invested in part in male control of money, which makes men able to purchase; but at the same time, their economic power is threatened by women who have the ability to take that money away if they were to become capitalist agents or consumers in seventeenth-century commentary on gender. Indeed, women are often represented as dangerous consumers. A concern for women's use of money drives Joseph Swetnam's vicious tract against women. He writes that "Moses describeth a woman thus: 'At the first beginning,' saith he, 'a woman was made to be a helper unto man.' And so they are indeed, for she helpeth to spend and consume that which a man painfully getteth."<sup>17</sup> Even as a whore, a woman is a consumer: she takes money from men's labor which allows her "purchase power"—a male prerogative that Swetnam suggests must be protected. He even advises men not to marry so that they can hoard money and property without the fear of it being taken by women: "far better it were to have two plows going than one cradle, and better a barn filled than a bed .... for so long as thy mind or thy body is in labor, the love of a woman is not remembered nor lust never thought upon" (206).

As Swetnam fears, an ability to consume does not necessarily mean that the woman is a leisured member of the upper class. Her economic participation through consumption is often denegated for its slip into sexual spending. The anxiety surrounding the ability of a woman who has the money to consume is homologous to the anxiety surrounding the woman who does not have money, but can get it by allowing herself to be consumed. For example, both parts of Aphra Behn's *The Rover* (part one 1677, part two 1681) depend in part on Blunt's consistent confusion of women of quality<sup>18</sup>



with whores,<sup>19</sup> and vice-versa. In the second part of *The Rover*, he is joined in his myopia by Fetherfool. They both mistake La Nuche the courtesan for a virtuous woman on her way to her devotions, while believing Ariadne, the niece of the Ambassador and a woman of quality, to be a courtesan. Fetherfool is even offended by the suggestion that he cannot tell the difference: "Prithee hold thy Scandalous Blasphemous Tongue, as if I did not know Whores from Persons of Quality" (11). Blunt is equally sure of his powers of discernment: "If this be a Whore, as thou say'st, I understand nothing--by this Light such a Wench would pass for a Person of Quality in London " (11). These statements underscore the extent to which strict taxonomies of women are interchangeable. Other male characters in both parts of the play who are not fops or fools will also mistake the sexual availability of the female characters, though not as pointedly--and not for laughs--as do Fetherfool and Blunt.

The Lucetta-Blunt plotline of the first part of *The Rover* serves as an example of comic misrecognition illustrating what a fool Blunt is; but at the same time, it shows clearly that sexual availability implies a certain hierarchical relationship between the sexes. The dynamic of Blunt's storyline and its resolution in the final act hinges on potential exchanges of sex and money. Blunt's anger at his unfulfilled evening, one in which he is robbed and humiliated by being turned out in his underclothes, turns into a rage against all women that nearly culminates in the gang rape of Florinda--no laughing matter. Lucetta, a "jilting wench," engages in a plot with her gallant, Phillip, to lure Blunt to her house and trick him out of his money. This plot is unbeknownst to Blunt who considers her a woman of quality, and flirts with her onstage. Blunt's evidence for Lucetta's "quality" is her wealth, while Willmore and Belville try to convince Blunt that she is in fact a

whore. Blunt responds "Why, she's a person of quality .... dost think such creatures are to be bought? .... Why, she presented me with this bracelet, for the toy of a diamond I used to wear" (2.1.48-52). He distinguishes between women of quality who do not need to be "bought" and whores who must be, implying a potential male purchase power over them. Their exchange of jewelry implies their impending exchange for sex, and foreshadows the outcome of that exchange. Lucetta's bracelet is a good faith gesture that will attain Blunt's trust and will no doubt be recollected when his belongings are stolen from him. He reads the bracelet as a measure of her generosity and wealth—a sure sign that she is not a whore. But Frederick exclaims, "'tis some common whore, upon my life" (2.1.66). Blunt offers more products of her conspicuous wealth as evidence to the contrary: "with such clothes, such jewels, such a house, such furniture, and so attended! A whore!" (67-8).

But Belvile knows what Blunt appears not to, that wealth can be made to magically beget wealth (as in *Volpone* ), and that wealth is not an automatic signifier of quality. He tries to convince Blunt:

Why yes, sir, they are whores, though they'll neither entertain you with drinking, swearing, or bawdry; are whores in all those gay clothes, and right jewels; are whores with those great houses richly furnished with velvet beds, store of plate, handsome attendance, and fine coaches; are whores, and arrant ones. (2.1.69-73)

Belvile points out that Blunt's logic is too determinate: in his world, wealth equals quality, while poverty, or a lack of purchase power, equals whoring for money. Blunt's determination of the value of women is inseparable from the value of money and goods. At some point, Blunt is convinced that Lucetta is a sort of whore, but he continues to read her "rich and fine" house as evidence that she is "free and generous": "Would she would go with me into England; though to say truth, there's plenty of whores already. But a pox

on' em, they are such mercenary prodigal whores, that they want such a one as this, that's free and generous, to give 'em good examples. Why, what a house she has, how rich and fine!" (3.2.22-7). He reads her fine house as a mystified social product—he is unable to see the truth of how she might attain it. To Blunt, her conspicuous wealth is a sign that she can afford to give sexual favors for free. But the very act of giving any sexual favors would in fact make her a whore. That Blunt does not recognize this is comic evidence of his naivety. The difference between England's "mercenary prodigal whores" and Lucetta is a difference in money—while England's whores are "mercenary," Lucetta is "free," so Blunt thinks. When Lucetta tricks him out of his property without having sex with him, Blunt is finally convinced that she is a whore.

The final scene between Blunt and Florinda, the play's faithful virgin, shows that a purchase of a woman for sex buys more than simply the sexual act. Blunt, in his chambers after being couzened by Lucetta and Pedro, conflates all women as whores: "A fine ladylike whore to cheat me thus, without affording me a kindness for my money! A pox light on her, I shall never be reconciled to the sex more ... Oh, how I'll use all womankind hereafter! What would I give to have one of 'em within my reach now" (4.5.7-9; 11-12). Just as Blunt has mistaken Lucetta for a woman of quality, he will now mistake as a whore the unfortunate Florinda who seeks refuge in his chamber just as he vows revenge on Lucetta for the robbery and his lack of sexual fulfillment. Addressing Florinda, he says he "will kiss and beat thee all over; kiss, and see thee all over; thou shalt lie with me too, not that I care for the enjoyment, but to let thee see I have ta'en deliberated malice to thee, and will be revenged on one whore for the sins of another" (4.5.48-51). Blunt admits that his rape of Florinda will be for revenge accomplished by enacting

malicious violence—not sexual pleasure—on her body. Such revenge will re-establish his proper place in a male economy where women are subject to men’s financial power guaranteed through their sexual power.

In the need to revenge his robbed masculinity, Blunt is blind to class differences between women, and the audience’s knowledge of this difference drives the serious consequences of his scene with Florinda. When Florinda presents Blunt with the ring that Belvile has given her, both he and Frederick begin to doubt that she is a whore. The presentation of the jewel at once signifies both her wealth and her virginity. Anita Pacheco notes that the ring is “the signifier that identifies her as under male protection.”<sup>20</sup> Blunt claims that “a wonderful virtue ... lies in this ring” (4.5.118-9) and tells Florinda that “twould anger us vilely to be trussed up for a rape upon a maid of quality, when we only believe we ruffle a harlot” (4.5.121-3). What finally secures Florinda from gang rape is Belvile’s formal recognition of her and their marriage agreement; he has a priest sent for so they can marry before her brother returns. At this point, when they realize that she is not a common whore, Blunt and Frederick are sheepish. Her class, and her status as the property of one man rather than a whore of many has saved her. Pacheco notes in fact that Belvile upholds class privilege when he saves her: “He appears on the scene not as an opponent of rape as such, but as the champion of chastity and class distinction, defending from involuntary defilement the woman who represents the patriarchal feminine ideal” (327). It is important to note again Blunt’s distinction between committing “a rape upon a maid of quality” and merely “ruffl[ing] a harlot”: depending on the class status of the woman, the charges are different, though the crime is exactly the same. The violence that Blunt and the others stage toward Florinda is justified by the fact that they think she is a whore, and therefore the threat of their aggression

is nullified by their “mistake.”

Importantly, as these passages from *The Rover* show, the most considerable threat of the whore is the generic applicability of her representation: any woman can be figured as a whore—actresses, women writers, scolds, transvestites—any woman with a quality that can be construed as sexually or economically deviant can immediately be considered a whore, a label that points both to her transgression of boundaries as well as the salience of the idea of women/money for demarcating those boundaries. This indeterminacy of the good woman and her always-potential slip into whoredom is an anxiety of class standing—the unlegibility of sexual availability indicates a slippage of class legitimacy. This construction propels the plot of the *Tragedie of Mariam*. But *Mariam* is a tragedy because that slippage is not resolved, or more precisely, is resolved only by the death of the offender. The comedies of Behn’s I will discuss in this chapter depend on the same construction for their saliency, but with an important difference: the chaste woman is always eventually successfully discernable from the whore because of her guarantee that she is supported by money without sexual exchange.

### III. Women/Capital

The rest of this chapter will focus on the textual construction of whoring (the most salient version of the women/money construct) which serves as a vehicle for expressing women’s classed sexual relationship to money. In the plays I consider in this chapter, including *Marcellia*, it is men who are represented as having control of wealth, property, and money. This ownership is central to the idea of prostitution, where women are bought by

men. Perhaps it is in the articulation of modes of exchange where any possible critique by the female authors lies: the women who write these plays recognize and try to create possible sites of resistance to women's exclusion from the (male) economy. I will now consider the figure of the courtesan<sup>21</sup> in two of Aphra Behn's comedies. In these plays, each woman's relationship to money also identifies her class standing. In *The Feign'd Curtizans, or, A Night's Intrigue* (printed 1679), Marcella and Cornelia pretend to be courtesans in order to escape the fates determined for them by their uncle. Since they have left home, they have no access to money except through their (male) bawd, who steals money from other men. It is this money that keeps them from actually becoming courtesans. But in the conventional comic ending of the play, they are only able to exchange the identity of the courtesan for another identity equally determined by rules of economic exchange—that of wife. But rather than having Marcella and Cornelia don the white satin of the bridal virgin, the play ends with both of the feigned courtesans in male disguise. This disguise might qualify a conclusion that the women remain trapped in a female role within a male economy. A similarly indeterminate ending concludes *The Second Part of the Rover* (printed 1681). While Ariadne, the play's conventional virginal maid, marries her parents' choice for her at the end of the play, La Nuche, the barely-reformed courtesan is neither courtesan nor wife at the end of the play. Do these two plays then offer means of resistance through their apparent revision of how women can be represented? I argue at the end of the chapter that even unconventional closure has an homologous ideological function to conventional closure.

In *The Feign'd Curtizans*, all three of the major female characters pretend to be courtesans in order to capture the men they love. The most infamous courtesan in the play, one that each of the men pursues, is la

Silvianetta. But la Silvianetta does not exist—she is Cornelia’s alias. Cornelia’s sister Marcella adopts the disguise of the courtesan Euphemia. Laura Lucretia, the third female character, has taken a house next to la Silvianetta’s in order to invite confusion between herself and la Silvianetta. Laura even initiates this confusion: in an attempt to conceal her identity, in the first scene, she orders her page to tell Julio, who is in pursuit of her, that she is la Silvianetta. The disguise of the courtesan allows the three women to move more freely in the society than they could as wealthy heiresses. Like the disguised gypsies in *The Rover*, they are able to walk the streets and seduce the men they want. Marcella rationalizes that they dress in their particular disguises “both to shelter us from knowledge, and to Oblige *Fillamour* [Marcella’s true lover] to visit us” (70). Marcella and Cornelia both face unbearable fates if they remain at home—Marcella to marry at her brother’s bidding a man she does not love, and Cornelia to enter a convent. Marcella insists that she is dressed as a courtesan only because “’Twas the only disguise that cou’d secure us from the search of my Uncle and *Octavio*, our Brother *Julio* is by this too arriv’d, and I know they’l all be dilligent, and some honour I was content to sacrifice [sic] to my eternal repose” (14). Disguised as courtesans, the sisters run the risk of losing honour so that they can gain it in the long run. Cornelia rationalizes this risk: “a little impertinent Honour, we may chance to lose ’tis true, but our right down honesty, I perceive you are resolv’d we shall maintain through all the dangers of Love and Gallantry” (14-15). Their “right down honesty” is more valuable than their “impertinent Honour.” By their logic, dressing as courtesans does not damage their reputations, as long as they remain intact and virginal. The disguise of courtesan allows Cornelia to play at being sexually available (which Marcella wants to avoid), but her class position

keeps her from acting upon it, even as she teases Galliard with promises of her availability. In fact, Cornelia implies that she would gladly give up her honesty. She romanticizes her pretended profession, claiming that the "thousand satisfactions" it appears to afford her are innocent, and not compromisingly sexual. She tells Marcella that being a courtesan affords a "thousand satisfactions ... more then in a dull virtuous life! Oh the world of dark Lanthorn men we shou'd have; the Serinades, the Songs, the sighs, the vows, the presents, the quarels, and all for a look or a smile"(15). She will spend only "a look or a smile" and not her sexual capital.

The threat of having to become actual courtesans in order to continue living away from their family hangs over Marcella and Cornelia's heads throughout the course of the play. Even though they are from a wealthy, aristocratic family, they must find means of support, because their wealth is not at their own disposal. Cornelia claims that their disguise is fast becoming an accurate signifier of their financial state: "our money's all gone, and without a Miracle can hold out no longer honestly" (115). In order to keep from losing their reputations, they must ensure that they have money from a source other than men giving it to them in exchange for sex. That assurance must be tangible, visible, undeniable by those who must judge (the male property owners). The verification of their honor comes in the final scene in which Petro assures the company (including their male guardians and their future husbands) that because they had money to live on, they were honest. This explanation is accepted without question. Petro's presence ensures that Marcella and Cornelia never handle money (unlike two of Behn's "real" courtesans, Angellica and La Nuche). As they discuss their chosen disguises, Marcella protests her sister's use of the term "courtesan," and Cornelia says "why 'tis a Noble title and has more *Votaries* then *Religion*, there's no



Merchandize like ours, that of Love my sister!" (14). As Cornelia figures love as merchandise, she undoes a strict division between love (even as a stand in for "sex") and money. By Cornelia's logic, they are used for the same thing: love is a commodity, something to be bought and sold. To Marcella's exclamation that rather than become actual courtesans "we must sell our Jewels!" (15), Cornelia asks "When they are gone, what Jewell will you part with next" (15). She clearly refers here to Marcella's virginity—that which guarantees her value on the marriage market. Both kinds of "jewelry" are economic goods. Marcella's virginity is symbolic capital convertible into real capital through an advantageous marriage. It signals her worth on the marriage market and a maintenance of her class standing.

It is the men in the play who aid an understanding of the financial dynamics of whoring. They (even the brothers of the women) rationalize visiting whores by pointing out the legality of prostitution in Rome. Fillamour claims that it is "Lawful enjoyment" (2), and Petro points out to Tickletext (an English Puritan) that in Rome, "the Ladyes are *priviledg'd, and Fornication licenc't* " (6). Tickletext then points out that "*when 'tis Licens'd 'tis Lawful, and when 'tis Lawful it can be no Sin* " (6). Octavio, Marcella's undesired intended, starts out by saying whores are all the same, except with one difference: "'tis ten to one are all the kind, only these [whores] differ from the rest in this, they generously own their trade of sin, which others deal by stealth in: they are Curtizans" (13). The use of the term "stealth" and its contrast to "owning" sheds light on Octavio's meaning here. While a modern usage of "stealth" obtains generally as "secretly, clandestinely,"<sup>22</sup> in the seventeenth century it meant a "secret theft" (def. 1 and 2). Therefore, the suggestion that certain whores "deal by stealth," means "by an act of theft; secretly and without right or permission." Octavio's assertion of their

different labor, then, is fuelled by a difference not only between licensed and illicit labor, but between private and public labor. Assignations that are not licensed must remain secret, whereas legal prostitution allows public display. But this distinction has to do with property as well, since whoring is here proposed as a theft. Whores who own their trade are not property; they usurp the male prerogative as property owners to control the commodity and own the means of production. It is therefore men's enjoyment of them sexually that ensures their low place in the hierarchy. If they are not one man's property, then they are all men's property.

Therefore, prostitution and whoring are not mainly, or only, constructions of the use of sex. They produce a maintenance of a certain (economic) order ensured through the sexual act and the configuration of that act as socially problematic for women, but socially necessary for men. Karras writes at different points in her book that prostitution was seen as a safety valve to hedge men's sexual desire. She concludes therefore that "Prostitution was a question of authority, power, and property," rather than sex (134). And Anita Pacheco, writing about rape in *The Rover*, asserts that "the woman is only secondarily an object of desire and primarily the terrain on which inequalities of male power are fought out."<sup>23</sup> She writes that in the play, "sexual encounters are defined according to the property status of the woman involved;" but what additionally defines the dominant male culture is that "male (and to some extent female) sexuality reproduces a socio-cultural script which measures masculinity by the capacity to exercise power, both over women and, through women, over other men" (341). The financial aspects of whoring are not merely financial, just as the sexual aspects are not only about sex—sexual representations are primarily a form of expressing (a potentially unsuccessful) dominance by men over women. Establishing a

relationship between money and the whore in which men's property rights are still at stake (which each play in this chapter does) does not allow for resistance on the part of the female character.

The pivotal point of *Feign'd Curtizans* occurs when Cornelia is finally able to entertain Galliard alone; in this moment when her sexual availability is truly available, she must reveal that she is not in fact a whore, as she has led him to believe. Galliard constantly judges Cornelia's apparent class status throughout the scene. He wants her to service only class-appropriate men, as is clear in his comments about Tickletext, who he thinks is one of her clients. His confusion is caused by the duplicitous signs of Cornelia's sexual availability, especially once she tries to convince him she is an heiress rather than a whore. The scene opens with Tickletext being led into the dark room by Petro (he has paid for services for la Silvianetta--the very money that goes toward the sisters' maintenance), and then Philippa bringing in Galliard (who has also paid). In the dark, they mistake each other for la Silvianetta, and engage in a kiss that reveals that neither is la Silvianetta. Galliard grabs hold of Tickletext's wig, and they chase each other around the room, on and off stage, and Tickletext finally hides in the chimney of the room, just in time to miss Cornelia and Galliard entering the room from opposite doors at the same time. Tickletext hides in the chimney unbeknownst to either Galliard or Cornelia, interjecting asides throughout this scene.<sup>24</sup> Galliard, thinking that Tickletext was another of Cornelia's clients, is upset that she would service a man like him:

Where have you hid this fool, this lucky fool?  
He whom blinde chance, and more ill-judging woman  
Has rais'd to that degree of happinesse  
That witty men must sigh and toyl in vain for? (48)

He protests that Tickletext is a poor choice for her in relationship to other

men: in obtaining her, Tickletext has been "rais'd to that degree of happinesse / That witty men must sigh and toyl in vain for." Cornelia does not know that Tickletext is in the room, and acts innocent. But Galliard holds up Tickletext's wig that he had grabbed from him: "Cease cunning false one to excuse thy self, / See here, the Trophées of your shameful choice, / And of my ruine, cruel—fair—deceiver!" (48).

Galliard maintains Cornelia's shamefulfulness, but what bothers Galliard is not that she is a whore, but that she might be indiscriminate in her choice of client. Even courtesans, then, are subject to specific male laws of exchange and circulation, defined by who should have them. Cornelia maintains that she has broken no promise to him, and therefore is not a false deceiver, while he is angry that she would accept someone below her as her client. Galliard tells her,

... prethee Jilt me on,  
And say thou hast not, destin'd all thy charms,  
To such a wicked use;  
Is that dear Face and Mouth for slaves to kiss:  
Shall those bright Eyes be gaz'd upon, and serve  
But to reflect the Images of fools? ....  
Shall that soft tender bosome be approacht,  
By one who wants a soul, to breathe in languishment,  
At every kiss that presses it! (49)

He visualizes her body violated by "a slave, a fool, one who "wants a soul." Galliard shows passionately that he is concerned with the use of her body. He worries about who has access to it, and what they might do with it, even though she is a courtesan, an object to be bought by whoever can afford her. His invective against her supposed promiscuity is as violent as any placed against Mariam's apparent lack of chastity:

thou art false to thy own charms, and hast betray'd'em  
To the possession of the vilest wretch

That ever Fortune curst with happiness;  
 False to thy joys, false to thy wit and youth  
 All which thou'st damn'd with so much careful industry  
 To an eternal fool,  
 That all the arts of love can ne're redeem thee!" (48)

He objects that her "careful industry" has given her "to the possession of the vilest wretch ... an eternal fool"—he objects to who owns her. Galliard believes that she has indeed given herself to someone as unsavory as the English puritan, and insists that she

swear,—and be forsworn most damnably,—  
 Thou hast not yielded yet; say 'twas intended only,  
 And though thou ly'st, by Heaven I must believe thee,—  
 —Say,—hast thou—given him—all? (49)

The "all" has an obvious reference: her body in the act of sex. Like a potential husband looking for a good value, Galliard envisions Cornelia reduced to the ownership of her body.

Cornelia, on the other hand, maintains her right to use her body as she wishes: insofar as she plays la Silvianetta, she has no qualms about welcoming the wealthy Tickletext as a client. She tells Galliard that "I've done as bad, we have discourst th'affair, / And 'tis concluded on" (49). But to Galliard, speaking is worse than lewd wantonness:

As bad! By Heaven much worse! Discours'd with him,  
 Were't thou so wretched, so depriv'd of sense,  
 To hold discourse with such an Animal?  
 Damn it! the sin is ne're to be forgiven!  
 —Had'st thou been wanton to that lewd degree,  
 By dark he might have been conducted to thee;  
 Where silently he might have serv'd thy purpose,  
 And thou had'st had some poor excuse for that!  
 But bartering words with fools admits of none. (49)

Galliard sets a sex act with Tickletext under the cover of silent night against

discourse, where those words are more public than the sex act. Their exchange of words has a different exchange value than an exchange of sex for money: they serve as a sort of equal exchange, a "barter," though they are exchanged with a fool. He tries to force her to go back on her word to Tickletext, to "wash it quite away .... Thou shalt be just and perjur'd, and pay my heart the debt of Love you owe it" (49). Instead of being the paying customer, or perhaps because he has already paid for her services, Galliard puts Cornelia in the position of debtor: he has upheld his end of their agreement, now she must offer him the service for which he has paid.

At this point, when Galliard is already suspicious of her, but nevertheless, like Blunt, ready to claim his property, Cornelia begins to unravel the deceit she has visited upon him for the time of the play. His disbelief that she is an heiress shows the dangers of feigning sexual availability. "Wou'd you have the heart—" she asks him, "to make a whore of me?" (49). He claims that he would indeed, and the stage directions note that he "*Offers to bear her off*" (s.d. 50). But she stops him with an almost ironic question: "Stay, do you take me then for what I seem!" (50). He states his belief that she is, in fact, a whore as she appears to be and has acted, and offers to make her that if she is not:

I'me sure I do! and wou'd not be mistaken for a Kingdome!  
But if thou art not! I can soon mend that fault,  
And make thee so,----come----I'me impatient to begin the  
Experiment." (50)

He is adamant that if there is a discrepancy, he will "mend that fault" and make her true to what she seems to be.

Cornelia quickly tries to shed the deceit she has laid out, by claiming first what would make her obviously not what she seems to be: "I am of Noble birth! and shou'd I in one hapless loving minute, destroy the Honour

of my House, ruin my youth and Beauty! and all that virtuous Education, my hoping parents gave me?" (50). She admits the value of her virginity that she is willing in appearance, but not in fact, to sacrifice; the duty of her noble birth keeps her from ruining patriarchal lineage as well as the reputation of her family in "one hapless loving minute"--the minute she loses her virginity. When Galliard nevertheless tries again to carry her off, she says "By all that's good I am a Maid of Quality! Blest with a Fortune equal to my Birth!" (50). Cornelia's repeat protestations finally convince Galliard to question her closely: "Art thou no Curtizan?" (50). "By all that's good," she answers, "I only feign'd to be so!" (50). Her answer makes Galliard furious:

No Curtizan! Hast thou deceiv'd me then?  
 Tell me thou wicked---honest couzening Beauty!  
 Why did'st thou draw me in, with such a fair pretence,  
 Why such a tempting preface to invite,  
 And the whole piece so useless and unedifying?  
 ---Heavens! not a Curtizan! (50)

His speech pinpoints the problem with her feigning: if she is not a courtesan, then she is "useless"--she has no use value--which means she is also devoid of sexual pleasure for him. She is "unedifying."

Galliard begins the scene furious that she could be entertaining other men who are unworthy of her, and entertaining them publicly with "discourse" instead of merely servicing them anonymously in the dark. But he ends the scene furious that she is virtuous, and furious that he has been duped by her into believing that she was available to him. He leaves thinking that she is merely trying to get a husband, and this belief is strengthened at the end of the scene when he discovers that Tickletext has been in the room the whole while, causing him to believe that Cornelia was harboring Tickletext as her "last reserve" (52). The sight of Tickletext has

invigorated Galliard to once again believe that Cornelia was in fact a prostitute, saving one man in case the other did not work out. Before finally leaving the stage in this scene, then, Galliard delivers one more invective against womankind, this time basing his misogyny in the class confusion that whoring creates:

Oh Women! Women! fonder in your Appetites  
 Then Beasts; and more unnatural!  
 For they but couple with their kinde, but you  
 Promiscuously shuffle your Brutes together  
 The fop of business with the lazy Gown-man—the learned Asse  
 with the Illiterate wit. The empty coxcombe with the Pollititian, as  
 Dull and insignificant as he; from the gay fool made more a beast  
 by fortune to all the loath'd infirmities of Age!  
 —Farewell—I scorn to crowd with the dull Herd! Or graze upon  
 the common where they batten. (52)

What disturbs Galliard is not that Cornelia might have been a whore, but that she was the type of whore that mixes different values of men together unjudiciously, by “Promiscuously shuffl[ing] ... The fop of business with the lazy Gown-man, the learned Asse with the Illiterate wit ... The empty coxcombe with the Pollititian.” He wants to be set above the “dull Herd,” and refuses to have sex with her. He figures her body (the “common” where the beasts “batten”) as the site of multiple instances of class impurity signified by and conflated with sexual impurity. Cornelia’s promiscuous use of sex threatens to obscure his own class status.

These final words from Galliard make his ultimate acceptance of Cornelia a little unbelievable, except that he finds out that she is indeed an aristocrat, “with a Fortune equal to [her] Birth.” In the final scene when Cornelia tells her uncle that she wants Galliard, Galliard protests: “I hope you’ll ask my leave first, I’m finely drawn in efaith!—have I been dreaming all this Night, of the possession of a new gotten Mistress, to wake and finde



my self nooz'd to a dull wife in the morning" (70). Cornelia assures him, though, that she will act like a "Mistress like wife": "you know Signior I have learnt the trade, though I had not stock to practice, and will be as expensive, Insolent, vain Extravagant, and Inconstant" (70). Galliard immediately, on hearing that she will act as a prostitute in their marriage, agrees to the match. Therefore, in the final scene, as is conventional, the main characters are paired off. Octavio gives his sister Laura Lucretia to Julio, rather than kill her out of suspicion that her honor had been compromised (as he had offered to do just lines previously), and when Octavio vows never to marry, Marcella is then free to step forward and profess her love for Fillamour. Quickly afterwards, Cornelia and Galliard become betrothed, with the stage directions calling for the characters onstage to give him her hand: "*They all joyn to give it him, he kisses it*" (s.d. 70).

Yet there is still another important matter to settle before the play can truly end happily. Morosini, uncle and guardian to the two feigned courtesans, asks immediately after Cornelia is given to Galliard: "And now you are both speed, pray give me leave to ask ye a civil question! are you sure you have been honest, if you have I know not by what Miracle you have liv'd" (70). He insinuates that it would be impossible for them not to become whores if they in fact needed money. But money saves the day, because without it, as Morosini has suggested, and as Marcella and Cornelia themselves have recognized, it would have been necessary that they become whores in order to make their money. Elin Diamond describes the ending of the play thus: "marriages settle the confusion of plots and the financial stink of prostitution is hastily cleared away."<sup>25</sup> The availability of money keeps "feigned"—a crucial word—in the title of the play; the fact that they had access to money without exchanging their "jewels" is the guarantee of their honesty.

In this play, women's sexuality functions as symbolic capital. Cornelia and Marcella are never money-holders, and in fact that possibility poses a threat the same as being a whore—it would amount to economic agency. Even more strikingly, the women themselves do not procure the money. Petro, their would-be pimp, has been in charge of their subsistence, and even answers Morosini's query for them: "Oh Sir as for that, I had a small stock of cash, in the hands of a couple of English Bankers" (70). Throughout the play, Petro has been gulling Signal and Tickletext out of their money, both by stealing it, and by selling the promise of sexual gratification with la Silvanetta and Euphemia to them. The "English bankers," Signal and Tickletext, upon hearing their names, come out of their hiding places and are upset to find that they have been tricked out of their money. Galliard, though, appeases them by saying that "since 'twas for the supply of two fair Ladies, all shall be restor'd again" (70). The final gesture in the play is to establish economic bonds between all classes of men, and to exclude women from them. Sir Signal makes up with his governor Tickletext:

And Governor, pray let me have no more dominering and  
Usurpation! But as we have hitherto been honest Brothers in  
iniquity, so let's wink hereafter at each other's frailties!  
Since Love and women easily betray man,  
From the grave Gown-man to the busy Lay-man. (71)

The play has been a rite of passage for Signal through initiation into the world of women. Against women and love, since they "easily betray man," Signal suggests that they can "wink ... at each other's frailties." He tells his governor that he no longer needs "dominering and Usurpation," presumably because that is a feminine position, and Signal has been initiated into male homosocial bonds. Signal's speech also recalls Galliard's invective against Cornelia that denounces sexual impurity by yoking it with class impurity.

Here, Signal again lumps male members of society together across class boundaries ("From the grave Gown-man to the busy Lay-man"), but this time it can serve as comic closure because there are no women in the mix to upset the sexual/class order. Male homosocial bonds therefore define a class that depends on the exclusion of women from economic agency, but nevertheless depend on them as a form of capital to be exchanged in order to create those bonds.

#### IV.

*The Second Part of the Rover* does not appear to end conventionally. Critics have suggested that La Nuche and Willmore's agreement to be together without being married signifies the possibility of resistant identity for women. For example, Heidi Hutner writes that "La Nuche presents an alternative model to that of the passive and commodified seventeenth-century woman. At the end of the play she is neither whore nor virgin; she cannot be confined by these categories."<sup>26</sup> Robert Markley similarly suggests that the ending of the play "potentially frees La Nuche to shed her role as sexual object and act upon her desire."<sup>27</sup> While both of these positions indeed capture the character of the final scene of the play between La Nuche and Willmore, they do not take into consideration that the other female character of the play, Ariadne, is unable to break out of any patriarchal authority, and must marry (by choice, though) the man to whom she is contracted at the beginning of the play (Beaumont).<sup>28</sup> They also do not take into consideration La Nuche's vocal absence in the final scenes of the play (while she remains onstage, she speaks almost no lines). Far from rewriting the economic, gendered place of woman, the play reifies it, making Ariadne conventional and La Nuche unrepresentable. While La Nuche indeed escapes the usual

fate for women at the end of a comedy, she also escapes representation. Willmore ends up defining what their relationship will be. He denies the idea that "Love and Gallantry" are in fact separate from marriage. Addressing Beaumont and Ariadne, Willmore speaks the final words of the play: "You have a hankering after Marriage still, but I am for Love and Gallantry. So tho by several ways we gain our End, / Love still, like Death, does to one Center tend" (85). Robert Markley reads the final couplet thus: "The center can suggest passion, with or without bawdy connotations, but its proximity to death suggests that love's center is being invoked as an ideal that transcends the vicissitudes that love and gallantry have gone through in the play" (124). But because it is yoked with death, and qualified by the "tho" in the first line, I would argue that love and gallantry are nevertheless conflated with marriage as an "End" (an appropriate gesture on which to "End" a play).

The relationship between Willmore and La Nuche is configured in economic terms until the end when La Nuche finally decides in favor of love (Willmore) over money (Beaumont), a decision that nevertheless has economic ramifications. As in the first part of *The Rover*, Willmore's thrift equates him with "a clever merchant [who] wants to get the most from the female good with as little out of his own pocket as possible."<sup>29</sup> This thrift extends to his reliance on his charm rather than his purse to gain entrance into women's beds. Willmore claims in fact, to "hate a Whore that asks me money" (5). The comedy here is underwritten by the defining principle of whoring: the defining exchange of sex and money. Therefore, he is swayed by Beaumont's description of La Nuche, whose name he will not tell Willmore, even at his prodding: "I would not breath it even in my complaints," he tells Willmore. "Lest amorous winds should bear it o're the World, and make mankind her Slaves. But that it is a name too cheaply

known, And She that owns it may be as cheaply purchas'd" (6). Beaumont frugally says that making her name known would heighten her popularity, thereby making her "cheaply purchas'd" (implying that she is not currently so). But Willmore hears only "cheaply purchas'd" and allows that to determine his lust: "Hah! cheaply purchas'd too: I languish for her" (6). He sets about to satisfy his lusts as cheaply as possible.

Because of his well-established penury, which goes hand-in-hand with his voracious spending abilities (he goes through Hellena's fortune of a hundred thousand pounds in a matter of months [5]), Willmore relies on economic metaphors and constructions to express his attitude toward women. When Willmore and La Nuche finally meet, they discuss her trade, with Willmore insisting, like Blunt, that it is mercenary to charge money for sex. Willmore laments to her that she is "one who lazily workst in thy Trade, and sell'st for ready money so much kindness" (13), again bemoaning his financial state and implying that she should either extend credit or give favors for free. La Nuche asserts that giving sexual favors for free would undermine the means by which she makes her living: "What, you would have a Mistriss like a Squirrel in Cage, always in Action---one who is as free of her favours as I am sparing of mine" (14). She knows that her price as well as her desireability appreciates the more discerning she is. She accuses him of being proud of his poverty, and cites it as the source of his misogyny. She says that "if little Eve walk in the Garden, the starv'd lean Rogues neigh after her, as if they were in Paradise" (15). She suggests that even though he is proud of being poor, that he "confidently" expects money to magically appear: "I have known you as confidently put you hand into your Pockets for money in a Morning, as if the Devil had been your Banker, when you knew you put 'em off at Night as empty as your Gloves" (14). In turn, he accuses her of being a

trickster whore who seduces men, gets money from them, and then does not deliver the services their money should have bought them. He tells her to “go pursue your business your own way, insnare the fool ... all this Cunning’s for a little Mercenary gain—fine Cloaths, perhaps some Jewels too, whilst all the finery cannot hide the Whore” (15). La Nuche criticizes his construction of prostitution and asserts that it is only because of men that she even has to be a whore: “There’s your eternal quarrel to our Sex, ‘twere a fine Trade indeed to keep Shop and give our Ware for Love, would it turn to account think ye, Captain, to trick and dress, to receive all wou’d enter” (15). In this scene, La Nuche shows her shrewd business sense, while Willmore shows his (strategic) misrecognition of the economic mechanisms of sexual exchange. Petronella finally pulls her away from the Rover by telling her that “Poverty’s catching” (15).

Since he does not “win” the bout with La Nuche (she does not invite him to bed, as does Angellica after a similar conversation with Willmore), he categorizes all women as mercenary whores, imitating Blunt after his rejection by Lucetta. Willmore’s conversation with La Nuche convinces him to give up on women (at least until he sees Ariadne a couple of lines later), saying that they are “slaves to Lust, to Vanity and Intrest” (16). He accuses her of feeding her vanity with the baubles and presents that her customers bring her which feeds her lust as well as a desire for profit. He yokes together money, appearance, and sex as insatiable desires. Yet he accuses *all* women of these things, not just La Nuche. He therefore configures all women into the category of prostitutes. While unlike Blunt, he has the visual sophistication to tell whores from women of quality, he nevertheless conflates them on economic and sexual grounds when he does not get what he wants sexually the way he wants it economically. In the course of the play, Beaumont comes

to see Willmore's point of view about women, and conflates women the way Willmore does: "What difference then between a money-taking Mistriss and her that gives her Love" (55). He and Willmore decide that there is no difference.

Willmore's conversation with Ariadne shows that, as promised, Willmore will immediately read her as a whore. Ariadne tells Willmore in no uncertain terms: "I am not to be sold" (17). Willmore, again on the lookout for a bargain, twists her words to mean that, unlike La Nuche, she would be willing to give him sexual favors for free. He tells her "Thou says't thou'rt not to be sold, and I'me sure thou're to be had---that lovely Body of so Divine a form, those soft smooth Arms and Hands, were made t'imbrace as well as be imbrac'd, that delicate white rising Bosom to be prest, and all thy other charms to be enjoy'd" (17). Women's sexual response is figured as a commodity, and Willmore imagines her body in use rather than set aside in chastity, as Ariadne intends it. She reasserts her worth: though she is not to be sold, neither is she for the taking, as Willmore seems to think. To his assertion that her charms are to be "enjoy'd," she designates only "By one that can esteem 'em to their worth, can set a value and a rate upon 'em" (18). Ever-conscious of his poverty, and his love of roving, Willmore exclaims, "Name not those words, they grate my ears like Jointure, that dull conjugal cant that frights the generous Lover!" (18). He figures marriage as a form of prostitution since it is set against a vision of "generous" (i.e., free) love. Having been rejected a second time, Willmore reasserts his belief that all women are "slaves to Lust, to Vanity and Intrest." He says, referring to both Ariadne and La Nuche:

you Women have all a certain Jargon, or Giberish, peculiar to your selves: of Value, Rate, Present, Interest, Settlement, Advantage, Price, Maintenance, and the Devil and all of Fopperies, which in plain terms

signifie Ready Money, by way of Fine before entrance, so that an honest well-meaning Merchant of Love finds no credit amongst ye, without his Bill of Lading. (19)

Willmore accuses women of being mercenary economists, and men just innocent “Merchants of Love” who are left out of women’s economy (which is “peculiar to [them] selves”), unable to enjoy its benefits (“finds no credit”), and when they do, they are punished with a “Fine before entrance.”

Disguised as the mountebank, a merchant of the duplicitous, Willmore will use the notion of a female economy to structure the whole of public politics, suggesting to the “City wives” that their beauty underwrites their husband’s worth. He entices them with visions of beauty, but also figures them as the gatekeepers of economics and public politics because of their standing both as commodities and as shop keepers:

Come, all you City Wives, that wou’d advance your Husbands to Lord Mayors, come, buy of me new Beauty; this will give it though now decay’d, as are your Shop Commodities, this will retrieve your Customers, and vend your false and out of fashion’d Wares: cheat, lye, protest and couzen as you please, a handsom Wife makes all a lawful gain. Come, City Wives, come, buy. (24)

After the logic he uses in this speech (that beautiful women are slaves to money, and vice-versa, that money is attracted to beauty), Willmore should not be surprised by his own accusation of La Nuche, that “Interest more prevails with you than Love ... you are a slavish mercenary Prostitute” (39). La Nuche reminds him that “all the Universe is sway’d by Interest” (39), and even asserts that she has “vowed Allegiance to my Interest” (40) as she gives him money and convinces him to leave her. Willmore and La Nuche’s puns on interest refer both to sexual interest and to monetary interest—both forms of symbolic capital accrue when they are held in abeyance, according to the principles of capitalism’s goal of accumulation. This revelation is an



appropriate one for the scene in which Willmore has accused women of being the basis of the public economy—it is exactly the system of beauty and marriage matches that underwrites the same system that produces prostitution as an outlet for male aggressions.<sup>30</sup>

The money that La Nuche hands him will revisit her as the play continues. Taking her money as a sign of her “interest” in him, Willmore tries to buy her with it. But she is not swayed by him, asserting that her choice would never lead her to him:

What desperate easiness have you seen in me, or what mistaken merit in your self, should make you so ridiculously vain, to think I'de give my self to such a wretch, one fal'n even to the last degree of Poverty, whil'st all the World is prostrate at my feet, whence I might chuse the brave, the great, the rich (46).

Since she can have anyone, she reasons, there is no reason for her to choose Willmore—especially because of his poverty. Willmore then flashes the money—presumably the money that La Nuche had given him—and refers to it as “the Charm that makes me lovely in thine eyes: 'thad all been thine hadst thou not basely bargain'd with me, now 'tis the prize of some well-meaning Whore, whose Modesty will trust my Generosity” (48). He tempts her with her own money, implying that he would give it to her, as would befit her original demand (that he pay for sex like her other customers). But because the money was hers in the first place, the exchange would not be an exchange at all—he is still trying to get her for free. Instead, he claims he will use it to buy a different, “Modest” whore.

La Nuche sees by this point in the play, with the help of a contrast between Willmore and Beaumont, that she has a choice between money and love. She sticks firmly to her “mercenary” ideas, disallowing love as a factor in her motivations when she speaks to Willmore: if she fell in love with

Willmore, she would then have to give her favors for free, and he would win their battle of economic wit. She tells Ariadne that “my Beauty and my business, is only to be belov’d not to Love,” (53). But later, away from Ariadne, La Nuche bemoans her state, claiming that in order “to be base and infamously rich,” she has “barter’d all the joys of human Life—oh give me Love! I will be poor and Love!” (60). Petronella, her bawd, talks her out of loving Willmore, convincing her to pay *him* in order to spend a night or two with him, thereby satiating her lust but keeping her available as a commodity.

While Willmore offers her love instead of money, Beaumont tries the exact opposite approach with her. He concedes that Willmore does have charms: “he’s nobly Born, Has Wit, Youth, Courage, all that takes the heart” (67). But Beaumont builds up his own position by showing that he can offer her the wealth that Willmore lacks: Willmore “only wants what pleases Womens Vanity, Estate: the only good that I can boast, And that I sacrifice to buy thy smiles” (67-8). In this scene, perhaps to flame Willmore’s jealousy, La Nuche argues consistently that money is better than love—though in asides, she shows her indecision. To Beaumont’s promise of money, she immediately tells Willmore: “See Sir—here’s a much fairer Chapman—you may be gone—” (68). She even tells the two men that money will be better for her in the long run. She speaks specifically in financial and business stratagems: “when I’ve worn out all my Youth and Beauty, and suffer’d every ill of Poverty, I shall be compell’d to begin the World again without a Stock to set up with; no faith, I’m for a substantial Merchant in Love, who can repay the loss of time and Beauty: with whom to make one thriving Voyage sets me up for ever, and I need never put to Sea again” (69). Her use of “Merchant of Love” recalls Willmore’s complaint that he is a generous Merchant of Love. But La Nuche desires a “substantial” one so that she can be provided

for after her professional value is past.

But La Nuche's asides in this scene show some ambivalence about the completely dichotomized lovers: "What shall I do? here's powerful Interest prostrate at my feet, Glory, and all that vanity can boast;—But there—Love unadorn'd, no covering but his Wings, No wealth, but a full Quiver to do mischiefs" (68). La Nuche's ultimate choice of Willmore shows that she chooses love over money. She finally admits her love for the Rover, and yet defends her profession, calling it "the Mine from whence I fetcht my Gold!" (67). Willmore's reply: "Damn the base trash, I'le have thee poor, and mine; 'Tis nobler far, to starve with him thou lov'st, Than gay without, and pining all within" (67). When La Nuche uses the word "Mine," she describes the source of her money: her purchased body in the sex act. When Willmore appropriates and reiterates "mine," he makes La Nuche his sexual property. In the end, when she and Willmore are together, their relationship, which is not a marriage, is constructed in the face of possible poverty, presumably from her leaving her profession, though she never promises to do so. Willmore is ready to commit to her: "give me thy hand, no poverty shall part us.—so—now here's a bargain made without the formal foppery of Marriage" (81). La Nuche appears to agree: "Nay, faith Captain, she that will not take thy word as soon as the Parsons of the Parish deserves not the blessing" (81). La Nuche's reaction to him is a sheer conundrum. Is she being sarcastic? Does one take the word of the Parson of the Parish? Willmore responds "Thou art reform'd, and I adore the change" (81), reading her statement literally, perhaps meaning by "reform'd" that she has come to accept that they can live without marriage vows (though she desires love throughout the play, she does not seem to want marriage). The ground of her acceptance of him without marriage hinges on how her line is read. If straight, as Willmore

takes it, then she is “reform’d.” If sarcastic, she has agreed to be with the Rover though she knows his word is ephemeral.

How is this particular act of closure to be interpreted? As I mentioned in the beginning of this section, it would be possible to valorize this resolution as an epiphanic moment in which La Nuche, unlike other comedic heroines, takes control of her own destiny and chooses an unconventional path. But Peggy Thompson deftly argues that

Behn cannot rewrite the political and economic structures that reserve power and wealth for men. Therefore, her latest and most challenging plays [including *The Second Part of the Rover* ] simply resist closure for central female characters, thus evading the trap of romantic union while simultaneously acknowledging the absence of alternatives for women.<sup>31</sup>

La Nuche in fact is given only two options, and the play cannot end until she makes a choice (remaining a whore for money does not appear to be one of the options): wife to Beaumont or poor, but with Willmore. She is not afforded the loophole that Julia is at the end of *The Lucky Chance*: to be without either lover or husband by choice. With the choice La Nuche makes, she has given the Rover what he wants--sex for free--which undermines the sexual exchange of her profession. La Nuche, who is neither wife, nor whore, nor virgin, is left at the end of the play without a space from which to speak. After her lines that indicate her “reformation” to Willmore, she literally speaks only two more lines, in which she acts as an economic witness to the casket of jewels whose ownership is being contested. She is excused from her silence only to support the economic class status of the other characters in the play (like Emilia in *Othello* ), and to return the jewels to the proper owner, who turns out to be La Nuche herself. This return symbolizes the restoration of sexual purity to La Nuche, who assures Sancho that Petronella “only seiz’d

'em [the jewels] for my use, and has deliver'd 'em in trust to my friend the Captain." La Nuche tracks the common pattern of possession of all goods: they might be "used" by women (especially courtesans), but they are "in trust" of men. It is as though her sexual purity has been suspended for the time of the play, and it is now restored in her relationship with Willmore, thanks to the doubling of the jewels as sexual purity and as money that keeps La Nuche from whoring.

But rather than give in completely to generic closure, the representation of La Nuche finds the articulation of the limit of conventional possibilities: if she is not a wife, not a whore, and has no money of her own, she is outside representation, signified by her silence in the final scenes. She isn't owned or circulated as capital in a conventional way, but as Thompson suggests, she isn't a conceptual possibility, either. Therefore, Willmore's final couplet sounds ominous in my reading as easily as it sounds liberatory in Markley's: the "End" to which the play works is the End of the availability of the woman in an economy of representation, of her representation in economy. If economy is invasive, if by virtue of its form it is always homologous to an oppressive patriarchy, then it is conceivable that being outside representation is a positive way of talking about La Nuche's fate at the end of *The Second Part of the Rover*. I have no wish to deny that particular reading, though if we accept it, we must then be reconciled to a silence about women at the very point where we would be able to articulate their resistance in seventeenth-century drama, even drama by women.

Therefore, the interpretive possibilities for La Nuche's non-conventional representation at best reveal that representation's homologous function to conventional ones. Like Marcella and Cornelia, she is able to rescind her profession with the help of the casket of jewels. Like Florinda's

marriage, her relationship with Willmore signifies a particular version of her class standing (poverty ameliorated by the jewels that she brings to the relationship). Laura J. Rosenthal notes that this type of closure, in which the female character appears to take control of her own destiny, has the potential to “empower” her, but she qualifies that argument by noting the spectatorial construction of the representation: “the prospect of occupying a similar position in the spectatorial economy to the women onstage—with all the implications for objectification that this entailed—compromised and contradicted their subjectivity.”<sup>32</sup> There are no truly alternative identities for seventeenth-century female dramatic characters because any identity always fits into an already public subject position, definable within a women/money construct (or one of its variations). Therefore, the economic situation I have been discussing throughout this study still obtains: La Nuche’s escape from representation is not a moment of resistance. While she is vocally absent at the end of the play, she is nevertheless specularly available. In that way, she still serves the economy of the gaze that helps define modes of exchange. In the specific case of the restoration stage, as I discussed in my first section, this (male) gaze has already interpellated her into one version of a conventional role.

## CHAPTER V NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Clare A. Lees, "Gender and Exchange in *Piers Plowman*," in *Class and Gender in Early English Literature*, edited by Britton J. Harwood and Gillian R. Overing (Bloomington and Indianapolis: University of Indiana Press, 1994), 112-30, especially 115-7. Citation from 117.

<sup>2</sup> Katherine M. Quinsey, Introduction to *Broken Boundaries: Women and Feminism in Restoration Drama* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 1-10. Citation from 8.

<sup>3</sup> Outside of individual sentences affirming the existence of *Marcellia* as the first drama by a woman publicly staged in London, the only critical treatments of *Marcellia* can be found in Elaine Hobby, *The Virtue of Necessity: English Women's Writing, 1649-88* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1989), 111-13; and Jacqueline Pearson, *The Prostituted Muse: Images of Women and Women Dramatists, 1642-1737* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), 133-5. Hobby writes that the play presents "courtship practices ... from a female perspective ... where women's solidarity with one another reveals their superiority to men when questions of 'pride' and 'honour' are concerned" (112).

<sup>4</sup> Lucidore's mistress is a lens through which the other women in the play are configured in terms of a slave/master relationship with the men they love. The men in the play consistently offer to be the women's slaves, in a conventionally Petrarchan move. See Pearson, 133-5.

<sup>5</sup> See Kim Hall, "Beauty and the Beast of Whiteness: Teaching Race and Gender." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 47 (1996), 461-475.

<sup>6</sup> Catherine Gallagher, "Who Was That Masked Woman?: The Prostitute and the Playwright in the Comedies of Aphra Behn," in *Rereading Aphra Behn: History, Theory, and Criticism*, edited by Heidi Hutner (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 1993), 71. For a similar argument, see in the same volume, Jessica Munns, "'Good, Sweet, Honey, Sugar-Candied Reader': Aphra Behn's Foreplay in Forewords," 44-62. As Hutner points out in her introduction, though, Behn's constructive use of the whore/writer identity based in a fractured identity "quite possibly elides female desire" (8).

<sup>7</sup> Janet Todd, Introduction to *Aphra Behn Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 1-12. Citation from 2-3.

<sup>8</sup> Julie Nash, "'The sight on't would beget a warm desire': Visual Pleasure in Aphra Behn's *The Rover*," *Restoration* 18 (1994), 77-87. Citation from 81. Drawing on Laura Mulvey, she also notes that even female spectators are likely to "objectify" a female character "in terms of her visual and erotic impact" (80-1).

<sup>9</sup> Joseph Lenz, "Base Trade: Theater as Prostitution," *ELH* 60 (1993), 833-55. Citation from 840. Lenz cites John Rainolds, 1599.

<sup>10</sup> See Ruth Mazo Karras, *Common Women: Prostitution and Sexuality in Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 20; Keith Thomas, "The Double Standard," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 20 (1959), 195-216, especially 198-9, 201.

<sup>11</sup> One of the most important social histories of prostitution, treating the nineteenth century is Judith Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class and the State* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980). See also Ian Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), especially "Crime and Society," 204-56.

<sup>12</sup> Joy Wiltenburg, *Disorderly Women and Female Power in the Street Literature of Early Modern England and Germany* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 1992), 169-72.

<sup>13</sup> Anne M. Haselkorn, *Prostitution in Elizabethan and Jacobean Comedy* (Troy, NY: The Whitston Publishing Company, 1983), 13.

<sup>14</sup> Jean E. Howard, *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 1994), 100-101. Howard is writing about the representation of women in conduct literature.

<sup>15</sup> Valerie Traub, *Desire and Anxiety: Circulations of Sexuality in Shakespearean Drama* (London: Routledge, 1992), 19.

<sup>16</sup> Jonathan Dollimore, "Shakespeare Understudies: the Sodomite, the Prostitute, the Transvestite and Their Critics," in *Political Shakespeare: Essays in Cultural Materialism*, second edition, edited by Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), 29-52. Citation from 38.

<sup>17</sup> "The Araignment Of Lewde, idle, froward, and vnconstant women ...." in *Half Humankind: Contexts and Texts of the Controversy about Women in England, 1540-1640*, edited by Katherine Usher Henderson and Barbara F. McManus (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 193.

<sup>18</sup> Quality indicates "nobility, high birth or rank, good social position" (OED, "quality," def. 4). In the case of the plays I will consider in this chapter, "quality" is often indistinguishable from wealth.

<sup>19</sup> Karras points out that in medieval England, the term "whore" was not reducible to an economic category, claiming that "money" is irrelevant to an understanding of whoredom (27, 29-30). Since "whore" is traceable to Latin terms for adulterer and fornicator, it is generally applicable to illicit sexuality, and does not necessarily indicate payment for sexual services (OED, "whore," def. 1.b). But "whore" does also mean a woman for hire, or a harlot (def. 1.a) in medieval (as well as later) England. While this latter meaning is clearly an economic category (a woman who hires herself out sexually), the general meaning of whore as a woman who has illicit sex is nevertheless informed by the fact that what makes the sex illicit is that she is another man's property. Therefore, both meanings indicate economic usage. The term prostitute, indicating a woman involved professionally in whoredom—an economic category—comes into use in English in the middle sixteenth century (OED, "prostitute").

<sup>20</sup> Anita Pacheco, "Rape and the Female Subject in Aphra Behn's *The Rover*," *ELH* 65 (1998), 323-45. Citation from 334.

<sup>21</sup> Courtesans are different from whores in that they are generally more exclusive than whores. A courtesan has a higher class status, and thus they present an easy conceptual substitution for wives. See Haselkorn, 1-2; 56-7.

<sup>22</sup> OED, "stealth," definition 5b.

<sup>23</sup> Pacheco, 339.

<sup>24</sup> Throughout the scene, Tickletext gets increasing amounts of soot on him from hiding in the chimney, so that the stage directions call for him to have "a face more smutted" (49) or noting that he is "more black" (49)—an easy reliance on the racist visual trope of blackness as ugliness that renders Tickletext the blackened butt of the joke, and marks him below either Galliard or a whore, lending racist credit to Galliard's protests about him.

<sup>25</sup> Elin Diamond, "Gestus and Signature in Aphra Behn's *The Rover*," *ELH* 56 (1989), 519-41. Citation from 524.

<sup>26</sup> Heidi Hutner, "Revisioning the Female Body: Aphra Behn's *The Rover*, Parts I and II," in *Rereading Aphra Behn: History, Theory, and Criticism*, edited by Heidi Hutner (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 1993), 102-20. Citation from 117. Hutner suggests that the second part of the play "undermines the ideology evident in these [traditional, patriarchal] conclusions" from the first part (103). This article is one of only a handful that treats *The Second Part of The Rover*.



<sup>27</sup> Robert Markley, "Be impudent, be saucy, forward, bold, touzing, and leud': The Politics of Masculine Sexuality and Feminine Desire in Behn's Tory Comedies," in *Cultural Readings of Restoration and Eighteenth-Century English Theater*, edited by J. Douglas Canfield and Deborah C. Payne (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 114-40. Citation from 124.

<sup>28</sup> For a reading that qualifies the play along these lines, see Lynne Taetzsch, "Romantic Love Replaces Kinship Exchange in Aphra Behn's Restoration Drama," *Restoration* 17 (1993), 30-38. While Taetzsch notes that "the comrade love of Willmore and La Nuche goes far in testing the Restoration ideology of gender relationships," she also asserts that "attempting to collapse the double standard is a formidable project" (36). She concludes, "it's difficult to imagine a *Rover III* in which La Nuche isn't conveniently disposed of as Hellena was at the beginning of *Rover II*" (36).

<sup>29</sup> Hutner, "Revisioning the Female Body," 107.

<sup>30</sup> Pacheco points out that women's "provocative role[s] enable[] the phallogentric rewriting of masculine aggression as female seductive power" (339).

<sup>31</sup> Peggy Thompson, "Closure and Subversion in Behn's comedies," in *Broken Boundaries: Women and Feminism in Restoration Drama*, edited by Katherine M. Quinsey (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 71-88. Citation from 75.

<sup>32</sup> Laura J. Rosenthal, "Reading Masks: The Actress and the Spectatrix in Restoration Shakespeare," in *Broken Boundaries: Women and Feminism in Restoration Drama*, edited by Katherine M. Quinsey (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 201-18. Citation from 215.

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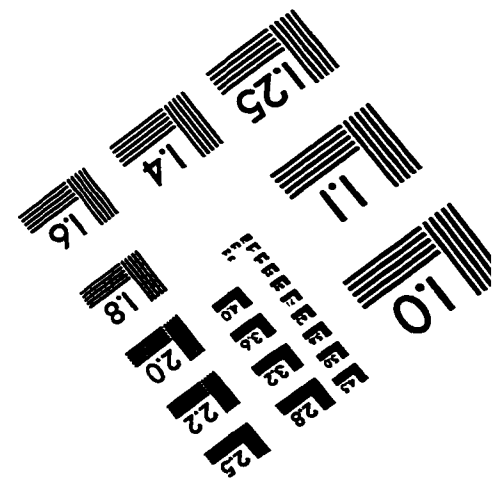
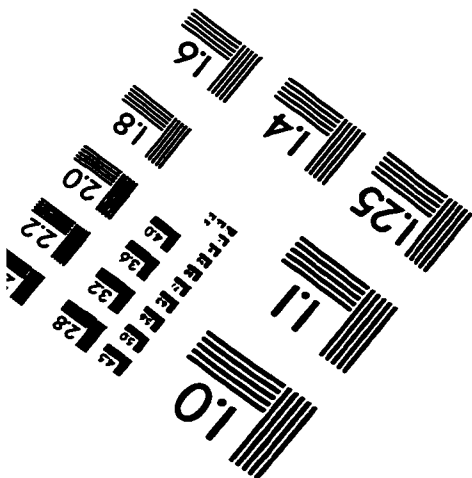
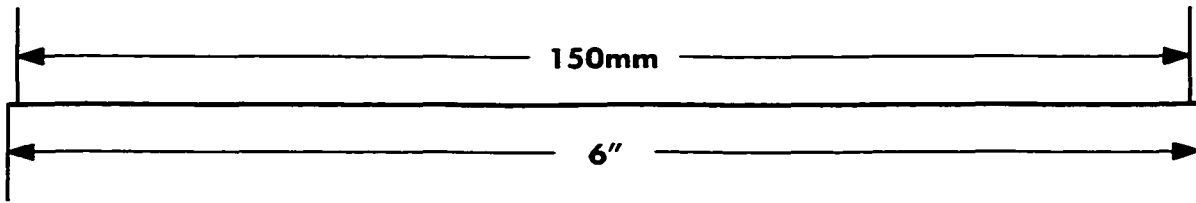
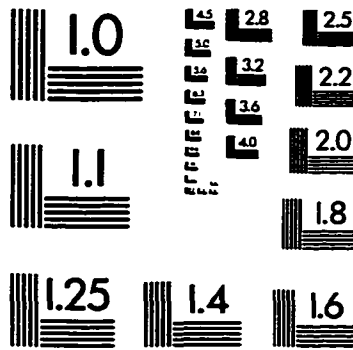
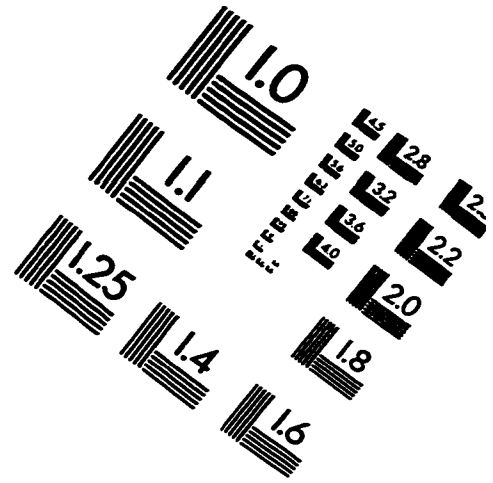
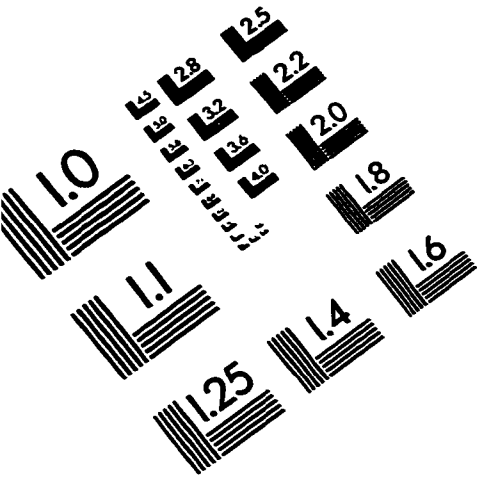
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